

clamor

The Revolution of Everyday Life

World Social Forum 2005
Permaculture | Straightwashing
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Third Wave Feminism

May/June 2005 • Issue 32

Traditions of Resistance



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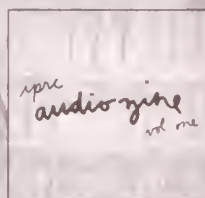
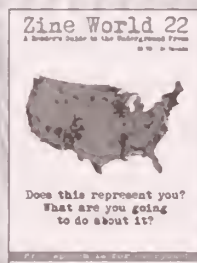
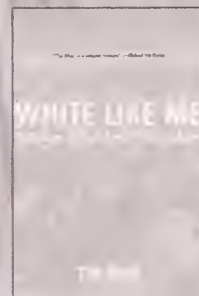


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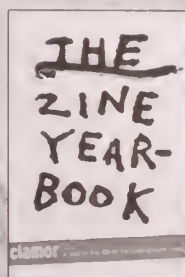
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from your editors

Fuck tradition. It's the sort of thing that jails us and keeps us from moving forward — it ties our hands with convention. It keeps women from earning what they deserve. It keeps people of color shut out from resources they need to survive. Mainstream convention tells us that we need to adhere to tradition to maintain our roots, but what traditions are we encouraged to adhere to? Traditions that keep certain people in power while others are left to fend for themselves? What about the traditions of resistance that encourage us to continue fighting for a better world for all of us? Noam Chomsky once suggested that "intellectual tradition is one of servility to power, and if I didn't betray it I'd be ashamed of myself." Being ashamed of ourselves is not something we're good at, and neither are **Clamor** readers. So we're bringing this issue to you to remind us all that we have a rich tradition (both ancient and newly established) of resistance to injustice. We're building traditions from the fires of inspiration we get from those who came before us on the ashes of outmoded mindsets that encourage us to just "trust the experts and everything will be okay."

When we're looking for traditions, we needn't look any further than Oakland, where AK Press is celebrating 15 years of anarchist publishing this year (p. 14). But if we did want to look further, this year's gathering of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (pp. 30 and 63) illustrates how a relatively recent tradition can challenge the powers of the elitist World Economic Forum and its counterparts. Keidra Chaney also talked with people from the U.S. and beyond to find out how people are responding to the changes in their communities (p. 22). Ken Allen and Don McIntosh recently debated the past and future of organized labor in the U.S. in an effort to find what has and hasn't worked for the working class in hopes of moving forward with a better. Courtney Martin takes us on a brief survey of the history of Third Wave Feminism and Rebecca Hyman examines the merit (or lack thereof) of the mainstreaming of queer culture in America in the sex and gender section (p. 38) — both invaluable discussions to be having as we look at where we've come from and where we're headed with regards to sex/gender politics in the U.S. And in the culture section, Jason Powers invites us to look at permaculture as one solution to environmental neglect — a positive, pro-active response to how we've been negatively taught to interact with the earth.

We hope you enjoy the issue. These are our traditions and the future we build with them will be ours.

Thanks for reading,

Jen Angel *Jason Kucsma*

our mission

Clamor's mission is to provide a media outlet that reflects the reality of alternative politics and culture in a format that is accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. **Clamor** exists to fill the voids left by mainstream media. We recognize and celebrate the fact that each of us can and should participate in media, politics, and culture. We publish writing and art that exemplify the value we place on autonomy, creativity, exploration, and cooperation. **Clamor** is an advocate of progressive social change through active creation of political and cultural alternatives.

clamor

Number 32 | May/June 2005



p. 14



p. 30



p. 63



p. 74

UPROAR

08 Where Clamor Readers Have Their Say ...

CULTURE

10 The Problem is the Solution by Jason Powers

14 AK Press: A Tradition of Resistance by Katie Renz

17 The Familiarity Factor by Megha Bahree

19 Beyond the Monoculture by Shilpa Kamat

PEOPLE

22 Changing Communities. Changing Traditions edited by Keidra Chaney

26 Upholsterer for the People by Courtney Martin

27 Reflections on a Hippie Childhood by Rebecca Hartman

POLITICS

30 World Social Forum 2005 by Benjamin Dangl

34 A New Tradition of Texas Populism by J. D. Pleucker

35 At the Edge of America by Dan Gordon

SEX AND GENDER

38 Straightwashing by Rebecca Hyman

41 Born in Flames Conference by Abby Sewell

42 Basketball, *Bitch*, and Beyond:

Surveying the Third Wave Feminist Landscape by Courtney E. Martin

44 A Troubled Tradition by Caitlin Corrigan

MEDIA

48 You Can't Do That On Television! The Conspicuous
Absence of Abortion on TV by Rachel Fudge

52 Media and Tech Traditions: Old and New
by Marie Lamb and Catherine Komp

54 Where are all the Environmental Stories? by Brian C. Howard

ECONOMICS

58 Unite to Win! Debating Reorganizing Organized Labor
by Ken Allen and Don McIntosh

63 WSF: Past, Present, and Future by Kent L. Laudt

MURMURS

67 What We're Talking About...

HERE

74 Ohio's Own BLUEPRINT by Blake Gillespie

Letters etc.

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Letters may be edited for length.
Not all letters received will be printed.

We're Not All "Persians"

I received my first copy of Clamor from a friend himself closely associated with another well-respected left publication who suggested that I read and perhaps write for your magazine. So it was with great surprise that I found the article "We are Persians" in your magazine (Clamor 30; Jan/Feb 2005), and I am writing to bring your attention to some of the deep mistakes and problems with that article. In effect, the elaboration of Iranian identity by the writer of that article is worthy of a neo-con publication and not of a grassroots magazine aimed at a young alternative readership.

To set a few points straight: there is a debate amongst the Iranian community in the US as far as the use of the term "Persian." As the writer herself elaborated, the term "Persian" has come to represent the section of the Iranian community that is associated with those who identify with the deposed dictator of Iran, the Shah. Nothing can be more surprising than to read about the Queen of a dictatorship in such a soft (white washed?) light in this magazine!

Furthermore, the term "Persian" is now being used by many in the Iranian community who wish to elevate themselves above the Muslim and Arab communities in the US. Instead of questioning the racist depiction of all people from the Middle East, these Persian-minded Iranians, buy into the racism, in effect, saying "We are Persians, so we are better than those Arabs that you see on TV!"

There is yet a third, and most concrete reason why the term "Persian" is an unacceptable term: not all Iranians are Persians. Although the Persians are politically and culturally the dominant group in Iran, the majority of Iranians actually come from various minority communities such as Turkish, Kurd, Baluch, Gilak, Arab, etc. etc. Equating the term 'Persian' with all Iranians negates the presence of these various ethnicities and falls into an internal imperialism than many minorities in Iran are fighting against.

I am not sure if the writer of that article is aware of the various sides of this discussion. Nevertheless, for those of us who have struggled to develop a progressive Iranian and Middle Eastern politics in the US, I find it is important to bring the attention of your magazine to these questions.

Thanks,
Kouross Esmaeli
New York, New York

Where's the Love for Street Papers?

I'm writing in response to your latest issue, "Making the Media that Matters." I enjoyed the issue very much, especially "Down to the wire," by Gwen Shaffer.

I was a little disappointed to see no mention of the street newspaper movement in North America, or throughout the world.

The street newspaper movement is a product of growing homeless population throughout the world, and in many communities newspapers have become credible news sources, while offering many people experiencing homelessness a small economic opportunity.

In places like Portland, Seattle, Boston, and Washington D.C., just to name a few, papers are tackling the issues of homelessness and poverty, that unfortunately, is often times left out of many liberal and conservative dialogues in a real and focused way.

Sincerely,
Israel Bayer
Forks, Washington

Open Letter to an Open Letter

Just a quick note to say that I agree with much of what Peter Gelderloos says in his letter (Clamor 31; Mar/Apr 2005) in your current issue. Certainly the bourgeois progressive media is uncomfortable with the ULA's working-class in-your-face noise and tactics; our strong embrace of contention and disagreement and our lavish use of free speech. They shouldn't be.

Regards,
Karl "King" Wencelas, Underground Literary Alliance
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

classifieds

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A woman marching at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (read more on pp. 30 and 63) Photo by Andy Lun

uproar

where clamor readers have their say

this issue we asked: **Tell us about the new traditions you've created for yourself and your friends.**

Our family and friends do a secular "giving thanks" before every meal. No god stuff, or airy-faerie NewAge(tm); we just hold hands and go around the table saying what we're thankful for that day. Then everyone ends with "Happy Dinner!", and kisses the hands of the folks next to them.

Great fun; freaks out the waitstaff, and makes fundies realize they don't have the 'saying grace' market cornered.

-Bruce Bullis, Los Angeles CA

I began to use the art of calligraphy and bring it to light in a new way. I have combined my own poetry in many instances, and some wisdom from the ages in others, and created a background of art, to create a new mixed media form. My artwork is both universal and personal at the same time. People really seem to relate to it, and hopefully this year I will have my own home web page.

-Irene Konig, Autin TX

After reading Naomi Klein's excellent book *No Logo* (on sweatshop labor and the encroachment of advertisement on public space), I was both disgusted by the plight of textile workers worldwide and determined to do something about it. I knew, of course, that the obvious answer was to completely abstain from buying clothing made in unfair and exploitative conditions, but that didn't seem to be enough. A few years later, after taking a quilting class, I came up with the idea of using old sweaters to make a huge, completely recycled quilt. As my quilt neared completion, I happened upon an article in Milwaukee

Magazine about a local quilt artist, Terese Agnew, who had recently completed a two-year quilt project called "Portrait of a Textile Worker." I had been one-upped... or rather, a few million-upped.

I was completely blown away.

The quilt, reduced to a tiny fraction of its 9' x 9' size for the photograph in the magazine, looked to be just that: a photograph. It was only after reading the article and seeing the detail of the work on the next page that I realized that Agnew had created her portrait of a Bangladeshi textile worker entirely out of clothing labels. The Bangladeshi woman who labored over her sewing machine was composed of the logos of thousands of companies that employed millions of men, women and children just like her.

The political statement is like a slap in the face. The extreme quality, subtlety, and mastery of the almost-photographic composition is perhaps even more awe-inspiring. But it was only after going to see the work itself, in person, at the Sharon Lynn Wilson Center for the Arts in Brookfield, WI that the wider significance (and optimism) of the piece began to set in. I stood between a handful of people, our faces one foot from the tens of thousands of labels (bearing both the damning symbols of clothing companies and the telling care labels: Made in China, Made in Korea, etc.), we all marveled at the handiwork and extreme dedication that was apparent in every stitch. But the real point, I felt, the real message, was in the medium itself: the quilt.

Ms. Agnew has made several other art quilts that are as laboriously crafted and as politically charged as this one. But "Portrait"

hits home because its medium directly addresses, and then openly defies, the objects of its message: sweatshops and the clothing companies that utilize them. Quilting has not traditionally been regarded as revolutionary, but "Portrait" leaves no option but to see the activity in that light. Quilting runs contrary to the very existence of the sweatshops and their exploitative labor practices in so many ways that it makes the political and social message of "Portrait" almost overwhelming.

First, quilts are traditionally made of recycled materials (as is "Portrait," with its perhaps 50,000 donated clothing labels). They therefore reject the throw-it-out-when-the-season-is-over mentality that all of these companies depend upon for their very existence. Quilts are inherently time consuming (Agnew's is the product of two years of labor), thereby doing battle with the impatience and immediate gratification that clothing companies and consumer culture in general thrive upon. Quilts also foster community and friendship- as in the age-old quilting bee- and therefore they combat the notion of material goods being produced by anonymous workers thousands of miles away from consumers. Agnew's quilt was completed- with time quickly running out- by several members of various quilting communities in Milwaukee. Quilts embrace tradition and innovation simultaneously, which

is the mark of true quality and all good and lasting art- as opposed to the sweatshops that churn out practically disposable new fashions. They are unique where the factories spit out mass-produced clones of T-shirts and logo-infested jackets. Finally, quilts exhalt in exactly the kind of do-it-yourself ethic that puts ordinary people back in touch with the material culture from which they have been estranged and alienated, exactly the kind of pride and sense of accomplishment that self-reliance fosters, and exactly the independent attitude that could grind the wheels of the garment industry to a halt, were it to spread.

Agnew's quilt is not just a labor of love, not just a masterful political statement. It is a declaration of war, and, with hope, a har-binger of change.

-Shannon Dugan Iverson, Milwaukee WI

I work with a loose-knit organization of experimental poets called PACE. We gave guerilla readings in Philadelphia's shopping districts on Christmas Eve morning. Along with CAConrad, Linh Dinh, and Mytili Jaggannathan, we each recited our work while handing out holiday cards & anti-war poems outside the Gallery, Liberty Place & Rit-tenhouse Square. The holiday PACE action was designed to urge shoppers to take the Iraq war discussion home to their Christmas

dinner tables. The Najaf occupation doesn't take a holiday, & there's no Christmas vacation for Americans serving in Mosul. We need to keep those suffering overseas in our thoughts.

PACE (Italian for *peace*) is planning further poetry actions in the coming year to take our work & our message beyond the libraries, galleries & bookstores. The Christmas Eve street readings launched our Poems to Philadelphia Project for 2005.

-Frank Sherlock, Philadelphia PA

next issue:

For the "Crime" issue, tell us about something illegal that you've done and did or didn't get away with.

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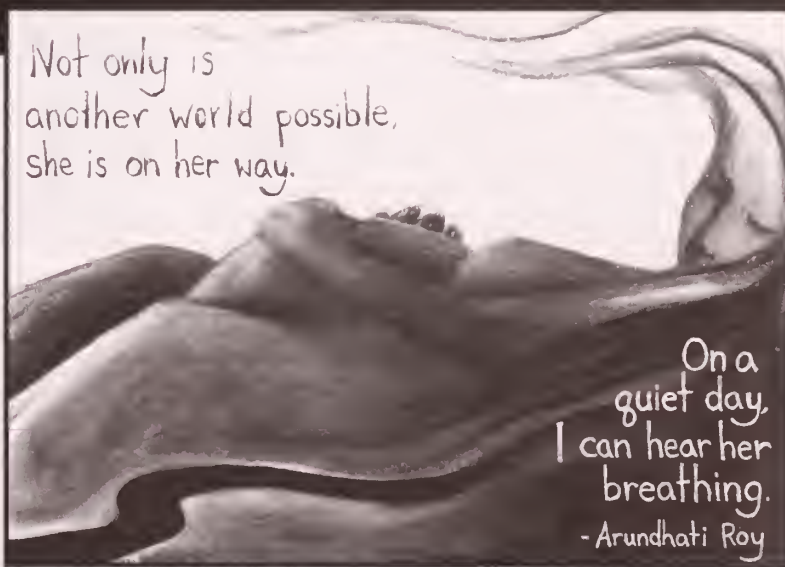
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-Arundhati Roy

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the Problem is the Solution

Cultivating New Traditions Through Permaculture

WORDS Jason Powers

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The sad reality is that we are in danger of perishing from our own stupidity and lack of personal responsibility to life. If we become extinct because of factors beyond our control, then we can at least die with pride in ourselves, but to create a mess in which we perish by our own inaction makes nonsense of our claims of consciousness and morality.

Bill Mollison,
co-founder of permaculture

Irresponsible traditions of waste, conquest, and over-consumption have dominated much of human history, leading to the collapse of many past societies. History has shown us that a civilization that undermines its land and resource base through wasteful and exploitative habits eventually will collapse. Today, the destruction hinges upon our wasteful and exploitative economy, based on perpetual growth, and the fossil fuel-dependent industrial agriculture that strips our soils and poisons our waters. Agribusiness corporations are consolidating ownership of the world's seed stock, while the genetically altered organisms they produce silently embed themselves into the wild gene pool, with yet unknown consequences for global food security and biodiversity. Oil and natural gas production, the cheap energy that our agriculture, industry, and transportation systems depend on, has most likely peaked and begun to regress. Extinction of species is drastically increasing due to pollution, ecological devastation, and weather change. Extinction of cultures due to conquest—euphemistically termed, “development”—and resource extraction is likewise increasing.

In many ways shielded from the effects of the global economy by our relative wealth, most in the "developed" world live unaware of the effects of our lifestyle, not knowing or caring where our food, water, energy, and consumer products come from, nor what is done to bring us these things. Even as we imagine progress and technological salvation, our systems and the culture they've created perpetuate denial.

Clearly, whether we choose to change or not, we will have to eventually. It's just a matter of when we're able to leave denial behind and look honestly at how we live. From this we will hopefully (re)develop skills and traditions that teach us to value and care for what sustains us: the land, our communities, and our relationships.

Permaculture arose from the realization that prevailing agricultural systems were fundamentally unsustainable and creating worldwide catastrophe. Based on observations of the sustainable systems of nature, as well as many of the traditions of indigenous cultures, permaculture was developed and applied in the 1970s by Australians Bill Mollison, a forestry worker and scientist, and David Holmgren, then a 20-year-old student. As initially conceived, "Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way,"² according to Mollison's *Designers' Manual*, the "bible" of permaculture.

Originally an attempt to return to systems of small-scale intensive gardens, permaculture now incorporates numerous techniques for ecologically sustainable living: grey water, recycling, solar energy, rainwater catchment, natural building, and local food networks. "You could say it's a rational man's approach to not shitting in his bed... a framework that never ceases to move, but that will accept information from anywhere," explained co-founder Mollison in an interview with *In Context*. Coined in 1976 as a conjunction of "permanent agriculture," the word permaculture has evolved to signify a "permanent culture," one that has since spread into a de-centralized global movement,

adapted and implemented by peoples in nearly every ecosystem, and socioeconomic level, by rural and urban, rich and poor.

Toby Hemenway, a permaculture teacher, designer and author of *Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture* likens permaculture to "A toolbox that helps organize [techniques] and helps you decide when to use them." Aiding this are four simple ethical tenets: caring for the earth, caring for people, limiting growth and consumption, and sharing surplus (goods, energy, time, etc.). Design principles derived from these tenets incorporate no-till and perennial gardening, use of natural patterns, energy efficiency, and intelligent use of space and resources. As in nature, stability is created through diversity and the relationships between the elements in the system. "The philosophy behind permaculture is one of working with, rather than against, nature: of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless action; of looking at systems in all their functions, rather than asking only one yield of them; and of allowing systems to demonstrate their own evolutions," Mollison writes. Practitioners try to integrate the different elements into harmonious relationships where cooperation and mutual support are encouraged, multiple functions are filled by one element, and multiple elements fill one function. This is seen in the "guild," a permaculture-specific technique which uses vertical space to stack and layer mutually beneficial plants.

To be sustainable, a system must create as much or more energy than it consumes, so closing energy and resource loops becomes very important. Problems are reframed as solutions and waste is redirected as inputs for other processes. "I have become increasingly aware of how the output/waste of my activities can be reused as inputs useful in other activities," admits Leopoldo Rodriguez, an economics professor at Portland State University with three years of permaculture experience. "I think a lot more about the placement of different elements in the process of putting a garden together, planting a tree in the yard or building a chicken coop." Beyond understanding one's own systemic impact, permaculture bolsters people's self-sufficiency. "Grow food or learn how to forage wild food yourself. The empowerment of this one



To be sustainable, a system must create as much or more energy than it consumes, so closing energy and resource loops becomes very important. Problems are reframed as solutions and waste is redirected as inputs for other processes.

act will have a great effect on you," says courthouse clerk Carla Bankston, an eight-year permaculture devotee.

In addition to this focus on sustainability and DIY practicality, successful application of permaculture depends on continuous feedback, adjustment and involvement with the design. "One key aspect is to reassess at every step and make sure that you're still in line with what your original goals were," Hemenway says. "You stay with the project for long after it's up and running because it's always going to change. It creates a long term relationship which will in the long run wind up being cheaper." He contrasts that with how things are typically done. "Our culture does a cost benefit analysis where we say 'Okay, this is the cheapest way to do it so let's do it like that.' It makes it very difficult to [do] anything resembling what sustainable cultures do."

Always site and system specific, permaculture is incredibly versatile. Its principles are broad enough to be applied to various systems — economics, home building, human relationships, and food distribution systems. Mayans in Guatemala, post-Soviet Cubans, and villagers in rural Zimbabwe have all successfully bolstered their communities' food security by ceasing to use expensive chemical-based processes. Instead they combine production-intensive and energy-saving permaculture techniques like mulching, composting and water harvesting with their traditional farming methods, concentrating once again on subsistence rather than producing commodities for export. City Repair in Portland, Oregon, applies it to urban planning with community-guided creation of public spaces and the integration of natural building into the cityscape. The Permaculture Credit Union in New Mexico invests in their community rather than destructive companies, offering loan discounts for fuel-efficient automobiles and second mortgages for energy efficient upgrades on houses. "I've seen businesses and organizations where people have applied permaculture principles that have helped them get a lot more functional," says Hemenway, "It works with so-called invisible structures as well as with visible things like landscapes or buildings."

"[Permaculture] involves rediscovering a lot of things we have lost," Linda Hendrickson, a Portland weaver and recent permaculturist, says. While it is true the philosophy challenges many of our modern habits, it is by no means anachronistic. "You look at the inputs and the outputs and embedded energy," explains Hemenway. "What did it take to build that solar panel? Is there more energy being consumed in the creation of it than you're going to get back from its use? I don't rule out any technology simply because its technology, but we look at it as how much really does it cost to be using this, and who gets hurt by it." Rather than reject modern know-how, permaculture examines both negative and positive impact, a more conscientious approach than our current mass delusion of "progress" as endless and thoughtless expansion.

This broad integration of technique and application, as well as the inclusion of ethics in design originally captivated Hemenway. While leaving his job at a biotech company, he stumbled across Bill Mollison's *Designers' Manual* at the public library. "I leafed through the pages and said, 'This is it. This is everything I've ever wanted to do. This is ecology and appropriate technology and design and gardening. It puts it all together.'"

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the many facets of permaculture design at first. Karen Tilou, who applies permaculture techniques to the orchard she manages, explains, "There's so much you can do, so people end up feeling like 'Wow, I'm not doing anything if I'm not doing all of it.'" To avoid this, "Find what aspect of permaculture's ethics and principles you can apply to what you really love. It doesn't have to be about gardens or solar energy."

Websites:

A Beginner's Guide: www.gburnett.unisonplus.net/Perma
 ATTRA - National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service:
attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/perma.html
 David Holmgren's website: www.holmgren.com.au
 Toby Hemenway's website: www.patternliteracy.com
 Portland Permaculture Guild: www.pdxpermaculture.org
 Permaculture Credit Union: www.pcuonline.org
 City Repair: www.cityrepair.org
 Kootenay Permaculture Institute: www3.telus.net/permaculture/

Permaculture Books:

Permaculture: A Designers' Manual by Bill Mollison
Introduction to Permaculture by Bill Mollison.
Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability by David Holmgren.
Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture by Toby Hemenway.
Urban Permaculture by David Watkins
Permaculture in a Nutshell by Patrick Whitefield

Magazines:

Permaculture Activist: permacultureactivist.net
 Permaculture Magazine: www.permaculture.co.uk

Related Books:

The Final Empire: The Collapse of Civilization and the Seed of the Future by Wm.H.Kötke. Available online at: www.rainbowbody.net/Finalempire
The One Straw Revolution by Masanobu Fukuoka.

Ultimately, permaculture is responsible to earth and home, wherever that may be. Joseph & Jacqueline Freeman, who live and garden on a ten-acre farm advise, "Start paying attention to the small things, like where your water comes from and where it goes. Keep your septic outflow non-toxic by using low-impact detergent when you wash clothes. Be aware of packaging when you make purchases. Develop relationships with elders and others of like mind so you can keep adding to your knowledge. Build community in whatever ways you can." Though nice to have the space rural areas offer, permaculture is especially important in urban areas. "The cities and suburbia are the places where the resources are being consumed," Hemenway observes. "It's where everybody lives in this country. If those places can't change then we're not going to get there."

By no means *the* solution, permaculture offers a valuable approach to restructuring our lives and counters the deleterious habits of our society by simultaneously looking forward to new technology and backward to older agricultural traditions and indigenous wisdom. In contrast to our current pathologies of short-term profit, waste, perpetual growth, oversimplification and reductionism, permaculture teaches us to slow down, observe, evaluate our actions and consumption patterns, to value the land, the local and relationships. ☆

Jason Powers lives in Portland, Oregon, Cascadia.

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new solutions to
 old problems



The AK Press collective (missing Craig O'Hara) amongst the mountains of boxes.

The fact that 2005 marks the 15th anniversary of AK Press is really not that unique.

"Anarchists have always written, proselytized, printed, and published," said Ramsey Kanaan, founding member of the collectively run, worker-owned, bi-continental publisher and distributor of radical media.

Kanaan isn't exaggerating. AK Press's decade-and-a-half springs from well-trod and passionate origins of do-it-yourself (DIY) publishing, something he regards as emergent of "the twin driving forces of anarchism" — working class struggle and self-organization. Such literary lineage has roots in the French Revolution of 1848, during which Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, whose writings form a basis for anarchist doctrine, edited four radical newspapers, all subsequently destroyed by government censorship. Later in the 19th century, Peter Kropotkin, another anarchist heavyweight, founded a magazine called *Freedom*, along with Freedom Press, which continues to churn out radical works today. In the United States in the early 20th century, Emma Goldman started *Mother Earth*; Alexander Berkman had *The Blast*. Immigrant anarchist communities, trade unions, and writerly revolutionaries, in America and abroad, made pamphlets detailing manifestos and political visions a common currency.

"It's kinda funny when you look into anarchist history," says Charles Weigl, an AK Press member. "It seems like every other historical figure you read about was a printer or publisher, or put out a newspaper, or was smuggling pamphlets into pre-revolutionary Russia."

AK Press, as a modern counterpart, is nothing new. Thankfully, they don't have to covertly scatter their 2,600-plus books, magazines and zines, pamphlets, videos and DVDs, and

PHOTO: Katie Renz

PHOTOS: Josh Warren-White

audio recordings. But AK's fundamental goal — "getting as much anarchist and radical literature as possible out there into the world" — is part historical, part simple necessity.

"Persuasion and 'leading' by example is really all we've got," Weigl stated. "We don't have the goal of seizing State power and imposing our views on the backward masses."

"We tend to see our main job as providing practical and intellectual tools to help people organize. Books aren't the only means of doing that, but they're an important part."

AK's more direct beginnings grew from another fruitful union, the coupling of anarchism and punk rock. At age 13, Kanaan was selling punk zines out of a plastic bag, already doing his DIY distro thing.

He remembered: "In 1981, I was peddling my wares at a big squat gig in London, where all the legends were playing — Crass, Conflict, Poison Girls. I was doing my thing with the plastic bag. I noticed a bunch of older dudes — in hindsight, I suspect considerably younger than I am now! — with beards and long hair sitting behind a table selling radical literature."

These hairy tablers worked at a radical bookstore in London called Housmans, a place that was also into publishing and distribution. Kanaan's plastic bag of zines was soon replaced by a table blanketed by political literature. His early publishing endeavors found fertile ground and mentored guidance at Housmans.

Kanaan founded AK Press in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1990, and established a "sister" collective in Oakland, California four years later. Today, what Weigl describes as "a motley collection of very different people," consists of nine members in the United States (eight in Oakland, one in West Virginia) and two in Edinburgh.

According to Kanaan, AK's mission as a propaganda-pusher hasn't been diluted over time. "The founding philosophy of AK remains, absolutely, first and foremost, a political project," he said. "[Publishing] just seemed the best way to direct our energies."

But their longevity isn't just about politics. As with any business in a capitalist system, AK is dependent on turning a profit. If they want to continue publishing media essentially centered on undermining an economic system wholly obsessed with screwing folks over to make a buck, they somehow have to participate (money-generation) without total acquiescence (exploitation).

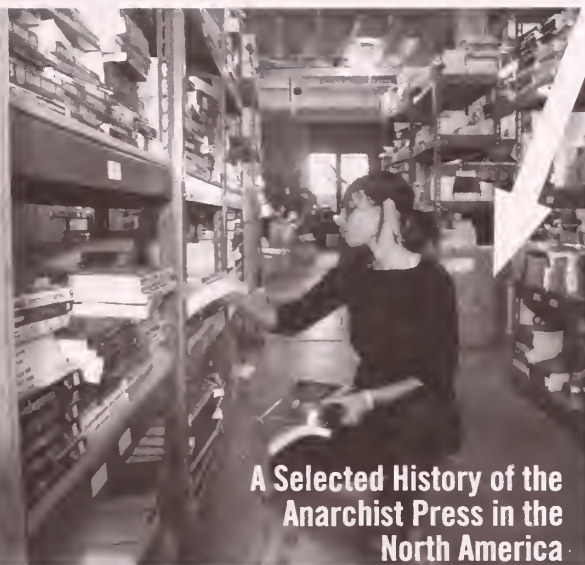
Weigl has struggled with this reality. "It's a weird contradiction." And one he recently came to terms with after studying Berkman's *The Blast*, which AK is getting ready to publish as a book format in facsimile reprint, where every page of the paper is shown exactly how it was originally published.

Weigl commented, "One thing that jumped out at me was the fact that they had advertisements. I don't know why it was surprising. Why shouldn't anarchists have had the same economic pressures a hundred years ago?"

Having to operate with one foot grudgingly stuck in the system while stretching to hand out tools to educate and inspire the overthrow of that system is nothing new in anarchist circles. As Weigl put it, "We always have to make difficult choices under far-from-perfect conditions in a society organized around principles we despise."

ZNet's Michael Albert pointed out the too-often fatal difficulty of ideal-based endeavors succumbing to economic strangleholds. Reflecting upon AK's anniversary, he said, "Providing truthful, insightful, visionary content in multiple media forms is a difficult task even with ample assets; it is nigh on Herculean without them. AK Press deserves a great round of applause as they embark on more years to come."

Albert is right. Fifteen years is a long time to run any business, much less one embracing anarchist principles. Collectives and organization sans hierarchy are great concepts, yet can be hard to maintain, considering the majority of modern institutions typically only provide counter models. But both Weigl and Kanaan are quick to



A Selected History of the Anarchist Press in the North America

- 1873-1893:** Ezra Heywood publishes the newspaper *The Word*, first distributed from Princeton, New Jersey and later Cambridge, Massachusetts. Heywood serves several prison sentences for the periodical's advocacy of radical individualism, free love, and labor reform.
- 1883-1907:** Moses Harmon edits the radically sex-positive paper *Lucifer, the Lightbearer*, first issued out of Valley Falls, then Topeka, Kansas, and finally from Chicago, Illinois. He serves several prison sentences because the magazine contains "anatomically correct language."
- 1884-1889:** Albert Parsons edits *The Alarm* in Chicago. The journal is quickly suppressed after the Haymarket bombings because it "advocates terrorism."
- 1886:** Kerr Publishing Co. begins in Chicago and is the longest running anarchist/socialist publisher.
- 1895-1897:** *Firebrand*, an influential anarchist/communist paper published in Portland, Oregon, is suppressed for "obscenity."
- 1906-1917:** In New York, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman edit *Mother Earth*, which is banned from the mail under The Espionage Act (1917) because the government finds it "treasonable."
- 1916-1917:** In San Francisco, California, Alexander Berkman edits *The Blast*, a militant anarchist paper that is anti-war and pro-labor.
- 1922-1971:** Osvaldo Maraviglia and Max Sartin edit *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, a fiercely anti-organizational Italian paper, in New York City.
- 1942-1951:** The magazine *Retort: an anarchist quarterly of social philosophy and the art* circulates
- 1969:** Left Bank Books, an independently owned bookstore, opens in St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1970:** Black Rose Books, a non-profit book publishing project, begins in Montreal.
- 1979:** The Kate Sharpley Library is founded in South London; is reorganized in 1991, with an office in Berkeley, California today.
- 1990:** Ramsey Kanaan starts AK Press in Scotland; four years later an office opens in Oakland, California.
- 1997:** Black Flag Books begins publishing anarchist materials in Berkeley, California.

above: AK Press collective member Darcie Debolt stocking inventory in AK's Oakland warehouse.

point out that AK's tenure is hardly exclusive. London's Freedom Press, Kropotkin's project from 1886, is the world's oldest anarchist publishing house. America's longest-running anti-authoritarian newspaper, *Fifth Estate*, is celebrating its own anniversary — the big 4-0 — this year. Left Bank Books in Seattle has passed the 30-year mark; Wooden Shoe in Philadelphia and San Francisco's Bound Together both opened their doors in 1976.

Although they are certainly not alone, when held in contrast to the 1,200 Borders

chains worldwide and the nearly \$6 billion in 2004 sales of Barnes and Nobles, AK clearly has the odds stacked against it. And in a book market seemingly devoted to churning out books that celebrate the next big trend in dicting, AK's contribution to the literary realm is a strikingly rare thing.

Author Howard Zinn, who has four spoken word CDs published by the collective and several books available, said he is "hugely impressed" by their survival. "I admire its boldness, its independence, its willingness to

take on projects that mainstream publishers wouldn't touch."

Perhaps Zinn's sentiment is best demonstrated by this past February's media frenzy over Ward Churchill's essay on 9/11, which AK published as the introductory essay to his book, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality*. Ward, the (now former) Chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of Colorado, essentially argued that in order to prevent future terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, Americans have to resist complacency and instead are responsible to pressure their government to comply with the rule of the law. His comparison of the World Trade Center's efficient "technicians" with Adolf Eichmann, Hitler's chief of operations in the deportation of three million Jews to extermination camps, however, instigated distortions by the right-wing press, a subsequent media brouhaha, and death threats.

AK Press's Josh Warren-White called this a perfect example of the collective's principled reluctance to shirk from debate and controversy. "No other publisher we know of would have touched the piece with a ten foot pole," he said.

And it appears the printed page will remain a space for AK-supported radical scrawlings for a while to come. According to Weigl, the organization has never been healthier.

Kanaan pondered the past 15 years: "I guess to have existed as a viable anarchist organization for this long is pretty cool," he said, humbly, though quickly and emphatically added, "There's a lot more to be done!" Think about it. Along with the basic challenge of distributing ever more propaganda is an even greater constant ambition, lest it be buried amidst the boxes of books or smothered within long-winded doctrines. "Social revolution would be pretty nice, too," Kanaan says. "Here's to the next 15, and a revolution or two." ★

Katie Renz is a voluntarily displaced anarchist nature chick, who currently resides near Golden Gate Park and rides her bike every morning to her internship at Mother Jones magazine.



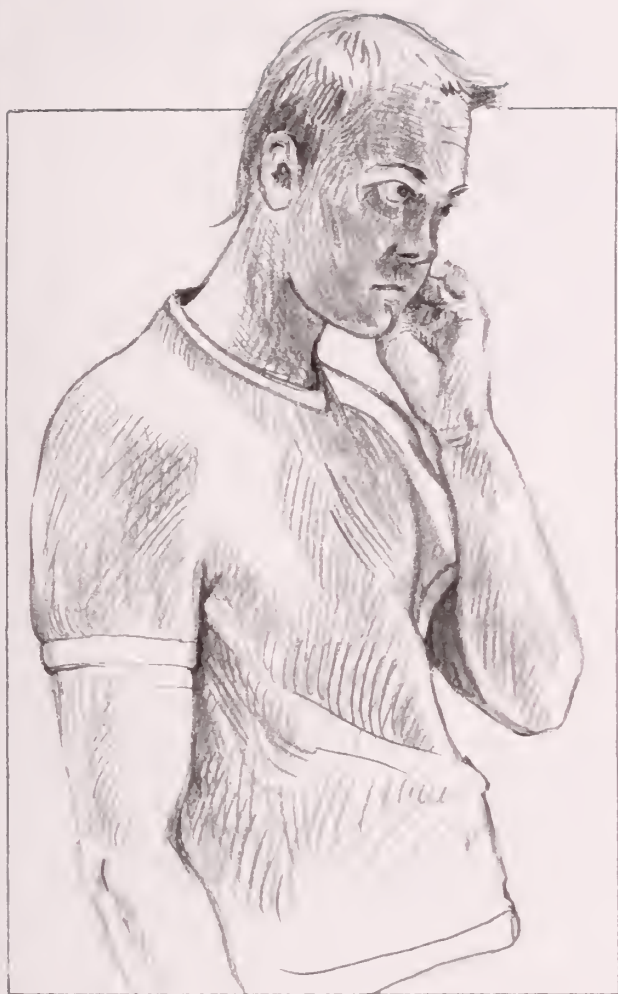
AK Press collective member and founder Ramsey Kanaan amidst the stacks

"The founding philosophy of AK remains, absolutely, first and foremost, a political project. [Publishing] just seemed the best way to direct our energies."

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The Familiarity Factor

A new study suggests personality is more important than cultural background in sustaining lasting partnerships. So why is intercultural marriage in the US so rare?

For most of the six years that Josephine Chan and Lucky Sandhu dated, Lucky let his parents do the traditional thing and look for a suitable bride for him in India. "Everyone knew that we were dating," recalled Josephine, 29, who moved from Hong Kong to California 16 years ago. "But they just ignored the subject and went with the tradition. I knew that every time he would go home to visit his parents, there was a chance that he could come back with a ring." Yet she put up with it. "I lost touch with my parents in India when I left home to do my undergrad at Berkeley," said Lucky, a Sikh originally from Chandigarh in north India. "I thought that if I married out of my culture, it would be yet another thing that I would take away from them. That sort of prevented me from protesting."

Dealing with family expectations is just one of many issues that people in inter-cultural relationships have to endure. Then there are the whole range of other potentially explosive issues to consider: unexamined prejudices, which cultural and religious traditions to continue, and which to put on hold — a consideration that becomes all the more immediate where children are concerned.

In a recent study, psychologist Eva C. Klohnen, Ph.D., and graduate student Shanhong Luo, M.A., of the University of Iowa, stated that people tend to marry those who are similar in attitudes, religion, and values. However, they also found, it is similarity in personality that appears to be more important in sustaining a happy partnership. The researchers looked at mating based on similar or opposite characteristics

words **Megha Bahree**
illustration **Tom Pokinko**

among 291 newlyweds who had participated in the Iowa Marital Assessment Project. The newlyweds had been married less than a year at the time the study began and had dated each other for an average of three-and-a-half years. The couples were assessed on a broad range of personality characteristics, attitudes and relationship quality indicators. "People may be attracted to those who have similar attitudes, values, and beliefs and even marry them — at least in part — on the basis of this similarity," the report said. "However, once people are in a committed relationship, it is primarily personality similarity that influences marital happiness."

Though intercultural marriages have increased steadily in the US since the 1960s, recent census polls suggest that most Americans are far more likely to end up with someone of the same cultural background. By 1992, the last year for which this information is available, 2.2% percent of marriages in the US were inter-racial, a tiny percentage for a country as culturally diverse as the U.S. This leaves the question, are relationships between people of a single culture innately stronger or easier to maintain? Or do people in cross-cultural relationships have a richer experience because they have had the opportunity to examine one's accepted cultural traditions and roles and re-examine them in terms of what they find truly important?

Take the case of Arun Sarna, an Indian Hindu, and his wife Heidi, a Caucasian American. This summer will be their tenth wedding anniversary. Their success, however, has not exactly been easy. Arun's parents live in New Delhi and through the years he has mentioned to Heidi his desire to live closer to his parents, to look after them in their old age. They have decided to settle mid-way in Singapore and are moving next spring. "On paper I liked the idea of living abroad but I'm established in my career and I have my friends and family here," she said. Heidi is a freelance writer and specializes in travel. Slightly nervous about the move, she said they have a three-year agreement after which they will re-evaluate their decision. The couple has also found inventive ways of compromising. For instance, their children have Indian first names, Kavi and Tejas, and have Heidi's grandfathers' middle names, Miles and Irwin. Religion hasn't been a major issue for this couple. "We discussed it and since Arun is closer to his religion than I am to mine, Christianity, we agreed the kids would be raised Hindu. I'd like my kids to learn about faith. It's not overly important to me whether they learn about faith through the Hindu story or the Christian one. I could accept Arun taking the lead in the children's religious upbringing because my feeling is that Hinduism is a very personal faith, it doesn't involve grand rituals and rites, thus it was easier to accept."

While the Sarnas have found a bridge across their religions, Manuela Badawy, 31, and her fiancé, Anthony Brown, are still debating it. Badawy, half-Colombian and half-Egyptian, was raised a Muslim. Brown, 32, calls himself a "typical waspy Canadian." In fact, the two had their first date three years ago during Ramadan one November evening at 4.37, the time to break the fast. Badawy no longer fasts (for health reasons she said). She defines herself as a liberal and rather Westernized Muslim who is not veiled and drinks wine. Yet she wants her future children to learn the Koran, and about the history of all religions in general. Brown doesn't feel the same way. He's more hesitant about the role of religion in raising their children. "She prays more often than I do," he said. "It's something I would join in a perfunctory way and I'm happy to hold her hand while she prays."

For the moment he is content to explore her cultures. "I've grown to love Latin culture and appreciate her Egyptian side as well. I had stereotypical views of both parts of the world because of lack of exposure. Now I love traveling to Latin America and have read a lot of literature, because of her, about Egypt, the Muslim faith and Mohammad — stuff that I would never have done on my own."

It's because of the obvious differences in the way tradition shapes one's perspective that there are people, like Michaelle Gabriel, who

feel that sharing a culture, ethnicity or religion makes coexistence easier. Gabriel prefers not to date any one other than black Haitian women. "I was 21 when I had my first girlfriend and she was white," she recalled. "One day we were walking down the street and these boys were coming towards us playing with a basketball. As they got near us the ball slipped out of their hands and hit my girlfriend and she was really shaken up. Later she told me that her immediate thought had been 'these niggers', and that was too weird for me. Everyone has their prejudices and that's fine, but I didn't want to have to deal with them." It was also fairly normal, she said, that whenever they were out at a restaurant the waiters would usually hand over the check to her girlfriend "because they automatically assumed that since she was the white person, she was more affluent and had a more advantageous background."

After that Gabriel, 33, tried dating other women from the Caribbean, but each time she had to deal with the stigma attached to her native country. "Haiti has a bad rep. When you say 'Haiti', people immediately get certain images in their mind because of how the media has portrayed it. I always have to hear some comments. I now prefer to date Haitian women because to me it's important to be accepted on many levels in a relationship. Someone can't really exclude you if you share the same ethnicity."

There may be something innately more comfortable about sharing a similar set of culturally-defined beliefs with your partner. A common background has helped cement Cindy Manalo's relationship with her fiancé Andrew Lee. Manalo, a Filipino born and raised in New York, never felt the need to date anyone from her ethnic background. Her last serious relationship, which was with a German man, convinced her otherwise. There were awkward differences that were as vague as American vs. European and as basic as the fact that no one in his native village, including his parents, spoke English. Three months after they broke up, Manalo, 33, met Lee, a 29-year old attorney who is half-Chinese and half-white. "I surprised myself that I ended up with an Asian," she said. "But it's good. Andrew grew up in Hawaii and his roots are very Asian. He's surrounded by Asian ethnicity, there's a familiarity and it was easier integrating into my family. I don't have to explain things at family functions and the foods are not that strange to him." In fact there is huge variety of foods that Lee loves, including bagoong (ground up anchovies), adobo (lot of vinegar style cooking), pansit (Filipino version of Lo Mein). And as with food, a shared cultural perspective, he believes, has made the relationship easier to maintain. "I've dated both white and black women," he says, "and they are very limited in what they eat, and not as accepting of things that don't make sense to them."

Getting back to Josephine and Lucky Sandhu, the reason they fell in love, they say, is over the qualities that they admired in the other. And though differences continue to pop up, they think that they have found the perfect partner. "Not all inter-racial relationships are going to work because of two main reasons — the husband and the wife," Lucky said. All other things — parents, relatives, cultural differences — are not that powerful. We can't make everyone happy. But as long as the main characters in a story can stand on their own feet, and they both are on the same page, it'll work out." ★

Megha is a journalist based in New York. Her passion is to write about the immigrant experience. She can be contacted at: megha@bahree.com



BEYOND THE MONOCULTURE

Second Generation Hindu-Americans Examine Their Heritage in the U.S.

Like many Hindus in America, I wonder what exactly I can tell people who ask me about my religion. While mainstream America abounds with lunchboxes brightly painted with pictures of Vishnu and words like *karma* find their way into everyday use, most Americans seem to know little if anything about Hinduism. If there is anything about Hindus in the media, it is usually about the hyper-conservative upsurge in India and their supporters abroad. Most of the Hindus I know are progressive and easy-going, but their voices are rarely or never heard. Like myself, most of them find themselves floundering when they attempt to discuss Hinduism in America because so much of what they say is misunderstood by people who are accustomed to the worldview and assumptions born of a monotheistic culture.

by Shilpa Kamat

Since there are no set rules in Hinduism, the flexible, pluralistic nature of Hindu tradition lends itself to a broad spectrum of interpretation, encouraging adaptation and personal reflection. As "Ananta," a first generation Hindu American notes, "You can say there are a lot of gods and goddesses, unlike in Christianity and Islam. And nobody says that he's the best god and others are not, because they're all equally important." This lack of hierarchy is present not only among deities, but among everyone and everything, since the divine pervades all. And though hierarchies have shaped the practices of many Hindu communities, the fact that people can find god in an ant, or place stones in the road on altars to worship demonstrates the respect among Hindus for everything as innately divine.

Despite the amalgamous nature of our religion, however, Hindus in America are prone to emphasize its similarities with Christianity. Many Hindus stress that the gods and goddesses embody different aspects of one divine source, in an effort to clump monistic and polytheistic elements into the dominant monotheistic model. "Rohan," a first-generation Hindu, told me, "religious people here have their own gods in their houses, and they take really seriously how to worship them, but when they talk to [non-Hindu] Americans, I think they'll simplify it" so that it fits within the monotheistic worldview. In truth, Hinduism can be monotheistic, polytheistic, monistic, or atheistic.

above: the author (far right) and her family.

The recent "fundamentalist" wave of Hindus in India, which parallels the Christian Coalition in the U.S. in many ways, further skews Westerners' understanding of Hinduism. "Geeta," a second generation Hindu-American attending Stanford, decried this segment of Hindus for their "propaganda saying that Hindus are too passive, that believing in nonviolence and that all paths lead to the same truth have made us weak, that we should rise up and fight because other religions have been oppressing us. That kind of propaganda is really annoying, total and complete self-victimization, and leads to nothing useful."

All the Hindus I spoke to agree that Hinduism is primarily picked up through osmosis—experienced rather than taught. As Geeta stated, "My mom and dad said, 'Nobody ever taught us rituals and prayers or what you do when you go to a temple'. There, rituals are absorbed; here they are learned." Many second generation youth, like myself, feel an intrinsic connection to our spirituality. The delicate connections that are fostered when someone grows up with exposure to a pluralistic worldview are the most difficult aspect of Hinduism for me to discuss. The subtleties that arise from a lifelong exposure to centuries of wisdom are not something that can be learned in a textbook or understood after studying abroad in India for a semester.

Rituals, rather than intellectual belief systems, form the core of many Hindus' spirituality. "We all revolved around our own rituals at home [in India]," Ananta comments. However, removed from a society where Hinduism pervades everyday life, second-generation Hindu-Americans are more likely to take an intellectual approach toward their religion. "One thing I like about Hinduism," Geeta remarked, "is that rituals are considered an equally valid way of knowing oneself as intellectual understanding. I think that people who are brought up here are more likely to shun ritual and mythology and question the underlying beliefs... Those who do consider themselves Hindu of [my] generation are often more likely to intellectualize Hinduism rather than embracing the rituals." This intellectualization can come at a cost, however, since the act of performing a ritual, such as a puja or chanting a mantra, can hold power in the experiential rather than cerebral understanding.

At the same time, blindly performing rituals can lead to a stifling, rather than liberating, experience. Raised in a village in India, "Rohan" has always spurned traditions that seemed pointless or orthodox rather than heartfelt. Immersed in a tight-knit religious community, however, made it hard to simply not partake. "In the apartments [in India], everybody's watching everybody all the time. Everybody knows what's going on" and will gossip about anyone who deviates from the norm. But, he says, "here, there's no pressure

because there are not as many [Hindus]. People do whatever they like. In India, you have to shower in the morning and do the puja in the morning. Here, you can take a shower at six in the evening and do a puja at seven."

When people are not forced to "do too much ritual, then maybe the real sentiments come in," "Rohan" suggests. As Geeta remarked, "The only thing forcing you to be religious is your own head here, and over the years, you begin to reject all the extraneous things you never really believed." While Hindus in India may partake in rituals merely because they are a part of the cultural fabric, the rituals that follow Hindu immigrants to the West may become a more conscious decision, if not for them then certainly for their children.

In the void that second-generation youth often face, they often may pick up Hindu practices only on a superficial level. "Deepa," a second-generation Hindu on the East coast, complains of this occurrence. "I think there are a lot of second generation Hindus who get sucked into [being overtly religious] to be all 'Indian'. They just do it to fit in or look good. Some of them don't even know that much about it. They're not even into practicing Hinduism in everyday life; they just go to the religious gatherings."

Hinduism in America is further complicated by the ways that non-Indians have been drawn to Hindu traditions. Especially among hippies and New Age movements, appropriation and exoticizing of Indian tradition are embarrassingly rampant. Deepa approaches the subject cautiously. "I think it's kind of strange," she admits. "Some of them are really fake. They're obsessed with themselves. I just think of someone who gets into eastern spiritualism because it's so focused on the self—there are people who just care about themselves completely. The people who can really get into it are people with money, and that's like the opposite of what these religions are about."

The lack of understanding exhibited by the way that most Westerners take in Hinduism is the result of an enormously different paradigm. "In India, religions aren't organized like here," Rohan notes. "There are swamis, but they don't try to preach and control. If people go to temple, they just go to puja and come out. There is no preaching there."

As Neeta Bijoor, a second generation Hindu-American who follows a swami in India comments, "Swamis advocate particular ways of thinking, but there are no mandates. There is a lot of room for thought. I could go to my swami and say, 'I don't believe you,' and he wouldn't really care. I wouldn't be kicked out of my community or religion." It strikes Rohan that Westerners who are attracted to Hinduism "are into gurus because they are used to [the paradigm of] a priest giving

a sermon every week. But in India, you just practice at home—whatever you feel like, or whatever you learned from your family."

But although "new age" ceremonies are often treated with scorn, there is something attractive about the idea of reclaiming a tradition and adding a freshness that makes it significant to our lives. As a second generation Hindu, I often do just that. Facing gaps in my remembrance of pujas and shlokas, I go by what feels right to me, whether that means praying at home or going to the forest to meditate. I can always ask my family questions about a particular practice, or research answers myself—which I do from time to time—but the particulars are ultimately secondary to connecting with the spirit within. On major religious holidays, I might attend community or temple events. For the most part, though, I am driven by my own transitions rather than those in the Hindu calendar, which I cannot read. While I may not have "absorbed" as much tradition as I would have if I had grown up in India, what matters is what I *do* know. Chanting mantras, practicing yoga, and putting together an altar in my bedroom, I piece together my own ceremonies, creating rituals and traditions of my own. ☆

Shilpa Kamat is a writer and yoga teacher who is currently working with homeless youth in Northern California. You can write to her at shilpa_kamat@yahoo.com.

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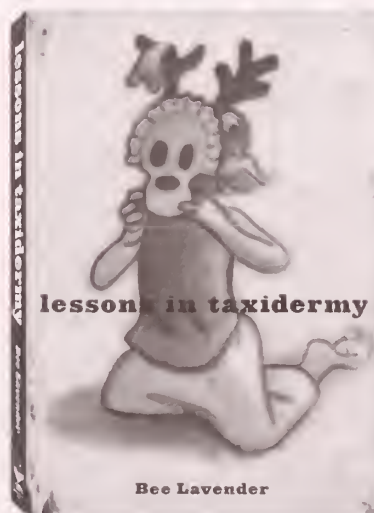
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Changing Communities. Changing Traditions.

As with religion, family, or cultural heritage, many of our traditions have been shaped and passed down from our communities. As neighborhoods and communities evolve over time, so do the traditions and rituals that define them. Many of the nine essays featured below deal with gentrification. Too many of us have seen our neighborhoods displaced and local landmarks like a cherished family-owned restaurant or corner grocery store closed down. But gentrification is not the only story of neighborhood transformation. New traditions, like neighborhood activism and cultural revitalization emerge when individuals organize in their communities to create change. The following personal essays and narratives are from writers, activists, and everyday people who have witnessed the ebb and flow of tradition in their own communities — and a few who are creating new traditions of their own.

Waiting for the landlord's Call

When I moved to the edge of the Ukrainian Village three years ago, I shopped for groceries at Edmar and Carniceria Jalisco. For a hot dog, I stopped at Odge's; for a beer, I stopped at Cleos. For a greasy diner breakfast, I could go to Lorraine's. There were more trees and fewer buildings, so my street felt both green and sunny.

These days, Carniceria Jalisco, with its butcher counter and produce aisle, has remodeled into the Rio Balsas convenience store; Edmar will be a Dominick's in a year. I can still go to Odge's and Cleos, but now we have a Subway. A new breakfast diner catering to less greasy tastes has opened. Several new condos have gone up, and their ground floors house insurance offices, realtors and dry cleaners. On my street, trees have been cut down for no reason we neighbors can think of. And when the city broke my old sidewalk to lay down a new one, they let big chunks crush my small garden. Now, my neighborhood feels both brighter and colder.

Sometimes I wonder when my landlord will call us to ask if we can meet him to talk about the rent. I'm waiting for him to raise it so it's competitive with the rest of the Village. I'm waiting to see if any of my predominantly Latino neighbors will move out, which would spell an end to our annual Fourth of July family block party. I'm waiting to see who my new neighbors will be in the condo windows across the street from me. I'm waiting to see if the city will chop down any more trees. Someday I won't be waiting any more; then where will I say I live?

-Amber Smock, Chicago

Keidra Chaney
Spike

God's Unchosen Cornerstore

As a child, Sundays were a ritual for my family. The three of us, Mother, sister and I, would go to church, which was then followed by a visit to our local green grocer. Being a 10-year-old who was more interested in Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation* video clip, the idea of going to church didn't excite me the way my mother would have liked. And it seemed that the only reason I would be dressed and ready for ten-thirty morning mass each week had less to do with genuflecting and lighting of candles to save our souls and more to do with the pilgrimage to Joe & Nancy's Fruit & Vegetable Shop.

Each week, Joe, Nancy, and their flock of hard working fruit sellers put on a mouth-watering array which put the lesson of temptation to shame. There were always plump strawberries, in gleaming enviro-plastic punnets ready for picking up and eating. Sometimes Joe would have washed and de-stemmed the berries so that eager shoppers could sample what was heaven on earth within deep red berry flesh.

Soon enough puberty hit both my sister and me, which brought the weekly pilgrimage to the house of JC, as well as to Joe's, to a screeching halt. Puberty may have hit the fruit shop too, as with the least ideal timing, the small business went under. It happened on what would have been any other regular Sunday, which saw the habitual act of shoulders disappearing beneath the blankets, each time my Mother would yell, "Wake up! You are going to be late for mass — again!" It was the Sunday which saw the three of us walk up to Joe & Nancy's where we were met with striking red paint across white cardboard.

The sign read, "Because the bank refuses to help us, we can no longer help you. Thank you for your support over the years."

This put a stop to any redemption I was supposed to be involved in at the age of twelve, and soon enough video clips on Sunday were the only form of soul saving for a pre-pubescent teenager angry at the system which took away the Joe and Nancy's of the world. It was so sudden than no amount of praying would have brought back the joy our ritual or the simple pleasures, which the fruit sellers brought a young girl of the Rhythm Nation.

-Saffron Lux, Belmore, Australia

Don't Move. Organize!

I used to go to street fairs and poetry readings with my Aunt Dawn Alvarado, who lived in the Mission District for two decades. Now, I have to drive three hours to go visit her. I'm pretty sure that there are a lot of people here who would trade all the new cool cultural amenities for a simple dinner with their displaced friends. And yet, as a lower-middle class single guy, the damage gentrification has done to me, personally, is relatively minor.

Is the glass half-empty or half-full? If the glass is full of rancid milk it doesn't matter. The only good that has ever come from the displacement game is the good that organized communities have fought tooth and nail to make happen. Last November, I took a walk through New York's Lower East Side with neighborhood activist Chino Garcia. Through the haze of a neighborhood turned into a playground there were tangible results of social struggle: many hundreds of units of permanently affordable housing, neighborhood centers, bike repair co-ops. Almost every single site where Chino's community still lived or worked, he started off the story with "They were trying to kick the tenants out of there, but we organized and..."

-James Tracy, San Francisco

Bittersweet Brooklyn

Some changes are subtle. And those are the ones that seem to get to me the most when I walk around my beloved Fort Greene, Brooklyn. The patisserie that's a block from my apartment. BAM Rose Cinemas

showing independent films. And of course, there's the new Starbucks. But the giveaway is the much greater number of well-groomed vanilla figures waiting for the C train at the Lafayette Avenue stop. I enjoy the fruits of the yuppie invasion, but deep down I can't help resenting what brought them here.

Extreme overpricing of real estate in Manhattan has resulted in Brooklyn becoming the latest conquest for affluent but price-minded homebuyers and renters. Brownstones that could have been purchased in the 1970's for the cost of a Honda Civic are now topping out for prices as much as \$1.5 million. Rents have doubled, even tripled since when I first moved to New York ten years ago. At that time, Fort Greene was being "revitalized" from a drug and crime-torn afterthought to a mecca for African American intellectuals, artists, and professionals. Spike Lee, Chris Rock, and Erykah Badu all lived a stone's throw from my studio apartment on Carlton Avenue. Fort Greene was the hip-yet-frugal place to live for young, free-thinking folks of all races. But what really made Fort Greene a home for me was not just the celebrities and the beautiful architecture and the open-mic poetry night at Brooklyn Moon Café. In Fort Greene, lawyers and bankers shared the same block with teachers and bus drivers. Single people and families. Young adults and the elderly. Different races, ethnicities, and economic stratas made Fort Greene what it was, a true melting pot.

The rising cost of living in Fort Greene has forced many of those deprived of six-figure incomes and rent-controlled leases out of the area. After losing my lease on my affordable studio, I also left the neighborhood for two years. I'm now back in Fort Greene, only because I'm sharing an apartment with two roommates. And I get my hot chocolate from Starbucks.

-Faith Pennick, NYC

Keepin' the City "Clean"

As a previously houseless, currently at-risk resident of the Bay Area who has been gentrified, evicted, and displaced out of almost every home, neighborhood, and community I have lived in, I speak as a homeless scholar.

I am the daughter of a poor, mixed-race orphan and the granddaughter of a poor Irish woman who worked her entire life as a servant of the rich, only to die landless, squatting on someone else's gravesite, because even in death you gotta have land.

Homeless people were not born that way; they used to be housed. So how do people lose housing, how does a community become landless, how do entire neighborhoods become displaced, and finally, how does a thriving community of color become a place in need of a hygienic metaphor i.e., "that area needs to be cleaned up?"

Most often the root of evictions, displacements, and destabilized communities is redevelopment and gentrification. Almost all Bay Area communities now considered "blighted" and in the process of redevelopment were once thriving and strong. Consider the case of West Oakland; once a thriving African Descendent community with Black-owned businesses and the arts, it is now one of the targets for redevelopment and high-speed gentrification. Sometime in the late '60's the zoning laws were changed, allowing liquor stores to be placed on every corner. Within what seemed like seconds, but really took about ten years, West Oakland was a "crime-ridden" community, blighted and in need of "clean-up."

Of course, the subversive capitalist "clean-up" process often begins with the moving in of the unwitting, yet most often, privileged art school student/graduate. Unwittingly, the artist turns the blighted area, like West Oakland, into an "accessible" area, readying it for eventual redevelopment. Meanwhile, the remaining residents of color are slowly but surely "cleaned-up" and eventually mostly cleaned out.

-Tiny, a.k.a. Lisa Garcia-Gray, San Francisco

Somethin' Just Don't Taste Right

When I was little, my father would often bring home a slab of ribs as a treat for the family on the nights that he had choir rehearsal. The South and West sides of Chicago were famous for the variety and abundance of barbeque joints. The smell of barbeque cooking is as familiar to black Chicagoans as the sounds of gospel, blues and jazz. It was the scent that brought my brother and me to meet Daddy at the door.

The ribs would be wrapped in a paper container; fries on the bottom, slab of ribs in the middle and two slices of Wonder bread on top. Sauce soaked everything so the bread stuck. Friendly fights began between parent and child about who would have the pleasure of eating the slice of bread with the most sauce. In the corner of the container was a paper cup of cole slaw so wet and soggy it left a trail of white rivers in the brown sauce.

Today, while driving to my job in one of the North side communities where Starbucks and Gap stores are markers of gentrification, I saw a sign for *Leon's*, one of the city's oldest "que" joints, painted on the side of a building. A branch of South side tradition living on the North side. Excitedly (and hungrily) I pulled over.

No smells wafted from inside of the building as I got out of the car. The people serving me were very nice but they were not the shades of brown that we call black. The food was good and was arranged as I expected (especially the bread). But the cole slaw was encased in a plastic container, no seepage possible.

Somehow it just wasn't the same.

-Terri Johnson, Chicago

Stand and Fight!

Bronzeville is where the rich and wealthy and the famous live, and so do I. My neighborhood is changing right before my eyes. The Stateway Gardens' and Robert Taylor housing projects were torn down in 2004, making room for condos, townhouses, and single-family homes.

Harold Washington Cultural Center is in the heart of the neighborhood, and the Spoken Word Café is across the street where they have poetry readings. In the summer, The African and Caribbean Fest is in Washington Park.

Why should I ever want to give this up? Brick by brick, building up the community and beautifying the neighborhood, I see improvements being done everyday, and I am glad to be a part of this change. It is only going to get better and become a safer place to live.

Black and white people live here, and people of different nationalities are moving in every day. More business will start to open up, and that will create more jobs for the community as the neighborhood developments.

It will be harder for the middle and lower income people to stay here, because of the rising cost of rent and the increase of taxes on mortgages. Right now, there is Section Eight for low-income families to help pay for their rent, but what if Section Eight is no longer in existence? What if you don't qualify for Section Eight, because you make a penny more over the guidelines to get help on your rent? What would we do then?

I want to buy in this area, but how can I afford it? Everything is extremely expensive. But I won't be pushed out or be put out of my neighborhood, because of the status of my wallet. I am going to climb that social ladder and fight for the right to live here.

-Jean M. Swanagan, Chicago

Cracks in the Sidewalk

Politically speaking, Brevard County, Florida, is probably best characterized by its choice in representatives — Dave Weldon. Weldon is closely tied to the radical right and is largely anti-gay, anti-choice, and anti-church and state separation.

In the '90s, Melbourne pro-life activists, implementing tactics such as videotaping employees and clients, pressured the county's only abortion clinic to close down. In 1994, Palm Bay city officials and residents worked vehemently to close down the area's only Wiccan Church, the Church of Iron Oak.

Even today, Brevard still seems like the *Choose Life* license plate capital of the state, and I'm always astonished how many people bravely boast their hatred via *One Woman One Man* bumper stickers.

But if you can see past the ugly history, and the fact our county reelected both Weldon and Bush in 2004, you'll find that progressive ideals are nonetheless beginning to germinate, and Brevard's legacy of intolerance is finally being dismantled. One of the pivotal periods in the evolution of our community was the buildup to the war in Iraq. A small group of us started meeting to talk about taking action to prevent the war. The result: two demonstrations with over 500 people in attendance — Arlo Guthrie even dropped in to play a few songs at one. Progressives were fed up and tired of being quiet.

Three years since the public erupted with outcry against the war, Brevard is ablaze with loud liberals, who are organizing, preparing to run for office, and participating in our democracy like never before.

Two days after the counter-inauguration demo, dozens of pro-choice activists commemorated the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. And, in the run-up to the election, an almost equal number of pro-gay marriage supporters turned out to oppose an anti-gay marriage protest in Palm Bay.

Just as many Americans joked about moving to Canada after the election, my wife Desirce and I often talk about wanting to move to a liberal community. But if we really want to take back our country, we need to be pioneers, boldly bringing our moral ideals to the very communities most festering with hatred and prejudice. It's not enough to simply join some haven for progressive thinkers. The only way to save our Constitution and our nation's legacy of freedom for *all* is from the inside out.

-Jeff Nall, Florida

continued next page

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Viva Chucky!

It felt good going to a place where everyone knew me and my family. "Tú gente" (your people), as Chucky would say. Chucky owned the local *bodega* across the street from my house on Ashland and Le Moyne. He had emigrated from Cuba during the Mariel exit in '59 and ended up "Chasin' a skirt," as he put it, all the way to Chicago in '71.

Chucky's spot was *live*. He'd play nice Caribbean music from open to close and always had something funny to say. His staff consisted of a butcher we all called Shank and Judy, the lady who worked the lottery machine.

Shank loved cutting meat. Sometimes he'd take my brother and me to the back and show us random animal organs, explain their function, and tell us how they should be cooked and eaten. Judy was consumed by makeup. Every time I came into the store she was putting some on, taking some off, or touching up some part of her face. She was the first and only person I'd ever seen do her face up using only a lipstick. She used it straight up on her lips and blended it with some cocoa butter for her cheeks and eyes. It was wild!

Sometimes I'd go to Chucky's even if my mom didn't need any rice or beans. I'd go for the show. We all knew that on Saturday morn-

ings he brewed his special Cuban coffee, which brought out all the locals. They'd sit on benches and chairs outside the store and talk politics, music, and local happenings. Chucky's was the core of the neighborhood. That's where we'd buy our food, play our numbers, and pass the time. But, things change.

Change came upon the neighborhood in the late '80's. Chucky sold his shop to a Korean couple with a child. They were polite. He said he wanted to spend the "winter of his life" somewhere warm and sunny, away from all the noise. That's ironic because he was the one who initially brought the noise ... the music, the conversation, the interaction that had been missing in our neighborhood for so long. He brought us together and gave us a place to hang out, a stage.

I'm thankful to have been a part of an engaged and conscious collective of individuals, who really talked to one other, shared their lives and ideas, and helped elect the first Black mayor in Chicago. I've not experienced a true sense of community since the *bodega* closed, but I've not given up on ever finding it again.

-Evelyn Delgado, Chicago ☆

Matthew Nafranowicz strikes a balance as Upholsterer for the People

Illinois native Matthew Nafranowicz is a craftsman with old-school skills. 16th- and 17th-century skills, as it were.

Nafranowicz, whose upholstery business The Straight Thread is located in the Madison Enterprise Center in Madison, Wisconsin, studied the art/craft as an apprentice in France. The furniture-making techniques he learned have been passed from person to person for centuries. "The [upholstery] trade is so much more alive there. It's well received in the community and country as a whole," he commented. "[The French government] provides funding to keep the skills alive. Without trying, it's something that could be easily lost."

Originally a biology major in college, he first got into upholstery when he responded to a help wanted ad. "I found it intriguing," he said. "I was into visual things like shape and form. I was good at using my hands."

The transition from would-be ornithologist to upholsterer occurred when he started questioning his desire to become a scientist. He decided to move to a big city and found work with a French interior designer in New York.

Nafranowicz became an apprentice in a foreign country with essentially no language skills when he went to France with his wife, a student of French history.

"That was the experience that made me realize this is what I want to do," he said. "I really physically enjoy doing it."

Most of the work Nafranowicz does today isn't the very fine traditional work he learned in France, but rather work on regular furniture people need to have done.

Among the tools and supplies in The Straight Thread's tidy workroom are cushion stuffings like horsehair and seagrass. These materials were abandoned, at least in the United States, before World War II in favor of cheaper ones.

"With furniture's mass production at a large scale, they came up with different things to cut corners. One thing that takes the space of something that costs more. They're shortcuts. Now it's like [the focus of production] is quantity and less cost. These objects don't have the beauty they would if done the traditional way or last as long."

Though eschewing the mass-produced is very punk rock, there's an unfortunate inherent conundrum in any well-made item. Ikea, the example



Courtney Becks

Nafranowicz mentions by name, is familiar to and extraordinarily popular with many people for the precise reason that it makes attractive, stylish furniture available to the same people who can't spend \$8000 on a bureau as a unique piece of functioning art.

"[It] allows you to buy inexpensive furniture. It's made to be mass-produced so it can be affordable for almost anyone. Things that are handmade are, on a certain level, only for the elite," he said.

Yikes. Not so punk rock.

But, as Nafranowicz points out, the key might be in balance, a virtue we in the United States constantly extol, yet aren't necessarily any good at maintaining: "People in this country instead of building a more modest house and [having] fewer really good items build a bigger house not as well-made, full of cheaper furniture. It's a balance of how much you really need."

Well-made furniture, he points out, is good for the second-hand market because it will last decades longer than anything made by everyone's favorite purveyor of Swedish cheap and chic.

Even if everyone can't or doesn't want to buy a Louis XV settee, it's still possible to support artisans and craftspeople. Of course, an obvious benefit of buying a hand- or well-made item is knowing its maker and his or her working conditions. More than that, and most optimistically, it places people in a — hopefully — happy web of relationships, knowing that we can fulfill each others' needs. ☆



Reflections on a Hippie Childhood

words Rebecca Hartman illustration Jt Yost

I am a native of an invisible culture. You probably won't recognize my cultural background if you meet me. *In fact, I didn't even realize that my culture was a culture until I was an adult.*

My parents were homesteaders. We ground our own flour and raised goats. We spent time in "intentional communities." When I went to school for the first time at age ten, I realized that my world was an aberration. I learned to speak the language of the mainstream. I learned to like Cyndi Lauper and Madonna. I learned not to mention certain things to certain people, not to use certain words in certain places. ("Don't mention solstice rituals to your normal friends. Don't tell your teachers you're 'pissed off.'") I learned to pass for "American."

In high school, far from the community where I grew up, I liked to regale my friends with stories of my "hippie childhood" — no indoor plumbing, lots of naked people, a huge rubber dildo as a Thanksgiving centerpiece. Fun to be shocking, but that was about it.

Until my freshman year in college, I hadn't really come in contact with anyone outside the communities I grew up in who shared my traditions. My background was defined by its outsider status. We were the counter-culture. Sometimes I told people where I came from, but it was always to point out my difference.

But in college, living in student-run co-operatives, we started to find each other. We found each other because we were not like the other coop denizens. We weren't trying to make a statement by living cooperatively. We weren't rebelling against our suburban parents. We already knew about organic food. We already knew how to cook. We were living in the coops because they were the closest thing around to the way we were used to living. We were bewildered by our housemates' ferocious enthusiasm about things that were normal for us.

We began to realize that we were different. But not in the individual "shock everyone with the details of my hippie childhood" way that we were used to. We were collectively different. One of us joked that he was in a cross-cultural relationship because his girlfriend had grown up in the mainstream. We laughed. And then we realized it was true.

Our culture is, in our generation, no longer a counter-culture. We are not counter-anything. We are natives of this terrain. Our culture has its own traditions, its own values and social codes, its own foods and foodways. Our culture is alive and evolving as a culture, no longer defining itself in opposition to anything.

Our food traditions are possibly the best known, the most emblematic of our culture. Nutritional yeast (and sometimes tamari) on popcorn. Tamari on just about anything. Brown rice. Whole wheat bread. Big pots of soup. Big pots of everything. Always room for one (or six) more at the table. Food is central. And social. And abundant. Tastier than the food we grew up with, too. Our parents often cooked more for the sake of theory than food. (Many of our parents, especially the

vegetarians, cooked under the "complete protein" theory: bean + grain = complete protein, therefore lentils + rice = dinner, never mind if they don't taste very good.)

Our culture is traditionally suspicious of doctors. We are more likely to reach for garlic than antibiotics, more likely to drink teas than take pills. We are fairly sure that our minds affect our bodies, but we are also suspicious of our parents' new-age "it's all in your mind" philosophy. Many of us have spiritual practices, but we don't tend to advertise them. Most of us cringe at over-public declarations of "spirituality."

Group interactions in our culture can sometimes confuse people from the mainstream. We tend to treat each other as family, whether or not we are related. We are at home in each other's houses. We do not have categories like "host" and "guest." If you come into one of our houses and ask if you can have a drink of water, we might look at you blankly and motion toward the sink. If we are familiar with host-guest relations in mainstream culture, we might explain the situation to you—that "make yourself at home" should be taken literally in this situation.

We are "at home" with each other in ways that mainstream culture might find surprising or rude. If at one of our gatherings someone wants to sit in the corner and ignore everyone, no one will blink. If someone suddenly announces that they're leaving early and doesn't offer an explanation, none is required. In the same way, it's perfectly acceptable in our culture to drop in on someone unannounced, even if you haven't seen him or her in years. It's also perfectly acceptable for someone so dropped in on to go on with whatever they've been doing without acting as "host" for the "guest."

We are also at home with each other physically. We tend to be close. We hug for no reason. Pile eight people on the couch. Sleep three or four to a bed, if necessary, or if we feel like it. Nudity is common. None of this is necessarily sexual, though we don't ignore sexual energy.

Sex is not taboo. We have sex, but probably not more than anybody else. We tend to be pretty accepting of different kinds of relationship arrangements. We are often close friends with our exes.

Not everyone with "hippie parents" is a part of our culture. There are definitely cases of reactive reassimilation: "Oh my God I was so traumatized by my hippie childhood, now all I want is a minivan and a picket fence." But I find that most of these people were neglected by their parents in some way. I can think of one family that ended up in Mexico, the parents too perpetually stoned to feed their kids. The oldest daughter was seven at the time, and she learned to scavenge and cook and keep things together. As adults, she and her siblings have had strong negative re-

actions to things counterculture, and I can understand why. But most of the "second generation" adults that are a part of my culture had parents who, though they may not have had it together on a lot of levels, at least fed and clothed us adequately.

Not all of our parents were hippies. Some were homesteaders, some were intellectuals or artists or just vaguely bohemian. All raised us with what has become our central cultural value: do what's important to you and don't worry about what people think.

Funny thing is, our parents (our culture's first generation) were really quite worried about what people thought. They worried about creating themselves in opposition to the mainstream culture. They wanted people to notice that they were different, that they were rejecting one thing and embracing an alternative. Our housemates in the co-ops were the same way.

But our culture's second generation tends to find the "difference on purpose" forced. Most of us are not interested in joining the mainstream, but neither are we interested in standing out for the sake of standing out. We stand out when it is natural for us to stand out and blend in when it happens that way.

In fact, our generation tends to be allergic to anything that feels forced, anything that smacks of trying too hard. Most of us cringe when our parents or friends want to "process" something. My old roommate says of us "If we need to talk about something, we

talk about it, we don't need to make a big announcement about it."

I'm not sure exactly what to make of this. In a certain way, our entire culture exists because our parents forced things. They developed a theory about how to do things, and forced themselves to follow it. With their declarations and oppositions, they created a space that we, the second generation, now inhabit. And in that space between counterculture and mainstream, we grew into a new culture.

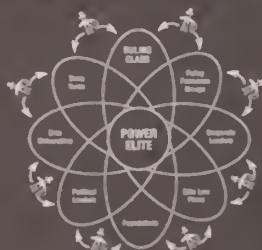
It's a culture that values experience over theory, shades of gray over black and white. It's a culture of translators, interpreters, enamored of subtlety, suspicious of hard conclusions.

As I am suspicious of hard conclusions, I won't make any here. If the first generation forced it and the second generation is going with the flow, I am curious about the third generation of our culture. My niece turns eight next month. She is a smart, self-possessed girl. She eats popcorn with nutritional yeast and plays with Barbies. She takes echinacea for colds and learns about the pilgrims in school. We shall see. ☆

Rebecca Hartman grew up in Lobelia, West Virginia. She now lives in Brattleboro, Vermont with a motley assortment of semi-grown-up children of the "counterculture." Reach her at rebeccach@gmail.com

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WSF 2005

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Maybe it had to do with the beer, or the heady mixture of languages, or the humidity, but it felt like something unique was growing out of the sweaty discussions and incessant drum circles. It wasn't the same energy one feels at a large protest or indoor activist conference, and it was more than a tropical version of Woodstock. There was a feeling at the fifth annual World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil that something extraordinary was happening.

In this week-long party of ideas and networking, another world seemed very possible. But when such an event occurs, it's hard not to wonder what will happen when everyone goes home. What went wrong at this international crossroads? And where might it go from here?

words and photos Benjamin Dangl

A key ingredient in this globalized stew was face-to-face conversation with like-minded people from around the globe. At a time when communication is dominated by cell phones, television and the Internet, 200,000 people congregated in one city just to talk with each other. There were Indian students sitting under trees conversing with aging members of Brazil's Workers Party, Argentineans sharing maté (a thick herbal tea) around campfires with Canadian media activists and North Americans listening to stories of water privatization from Ghanaians.

"You always leave the World Social Forum with more than you arrived with," Pupi Palero, a member of a program in Mendoza, Argentina that works with micro-credit for women, said. She has been to the WSF in Porto Alegre four times. "Sure, there are people who go to the forum and then just leave and do nothing. Others are inspired to work more. Like me, on a personal level the forums gave me a lot of hope, and after going to the first forum in 2001, I realized I had to do something, so I began working more with organizing and activism in Mendoza."

For many participants, the forum is all about global networking. "You can run into a large amount of diversity, and people from all over with information about anti-capitalist politics, human rights and the environment and so on," Jimena*, from Cordoba, Argentina, said. "But, more than the conferences, it offers a chance to meet people and talk with them about the different themes important to them, get to know what the problems are from their country and region, get contacts and organize for specific actions and programs."

The WSF was founded in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil to parallel the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, an annual gathering of business and political leaders. Whereas those at the Davos forum believe the world can be improved through free market business deals, the WSF is a process of seeking and building alternatives to neoliberal policies. Four of the five social forums have been held in Porto Alegre. Last year it was in Bombay, India and this year it was back in Brazil during the last week in January. From day one of the WSF, activists of all ages arrived in Porto Alegre. Some traveled in bus or plane; others hitchhiked.

A space for the democratic exchanges of ideas and experiences, the WSF is home to panels and workshops led by intellectuals and representatives from social movements and civil society groups from around the globe. Previous participants include Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, and Naomi Klein. The events are organized around the WSF slogan, "Another World is Possible." This other world is meant to be one without war, injustice, racism, and economic inequality.

For all of its colorful topics and variety, the instant gratification of the forum left some people wondering how much they were actually learning. "It is contradictory that you get a lot of information, exchanges and experience in such a short time," explained Leo Kuehberger, a PhD student from Austria and author of the book *We Make History* about the anti-globalization protests in Genoa, Italy. "For example, if I wanted to understand the experience of factory workers in my town it takes months, years. So can I really understand that much in a week at the social forum?"

The 2005 WSF didn't come without its faults. For example, workshops were often canceled or relocated without any prior announcement, translators sometimes never showed up, or a band played next to the tent, drowning out the speaker. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, some of the best aspects of the forum were not the organized events, they were the informal talks people were able to have day and night with each other on topics ranging from Bush's re-election to alternative media in Patagonia.

The forum was comprised mainly of tents and buildings, some of them mildly air conditioned, situated along the beach of the Guaíba River. In the middle of the WSF expanse was the city's Harmony Park, home to the International Youth Camp, an event organized to provide cheap accommodation and youth oriented activities for WSF activists. Some 35,000 people stayed at the camp, which was full of non-stop discussions, debates, film screenings, partying and music.

The Youth Camp, because of its central location and festive atmosphere, was the life of the party. Yet the energy of both events fed off of each other. "There are so many young people here, and the WSF produces an incredible awareness in them," Paolo*, student from Porto Alegre commented. "They're the ones who will be the intellectuals



"It's not possible to continue to say 'another world is possible' if we do not make some proposals about how to reach this other world."



and leaders in the future. The forum allows youth to interact with the most imminent intellectuals of the left, who are able to pass their experience and knowledge on to younger people. It is an experience that will stay with them forever."

Other aspects of the forum were more problematic. "One huge issue at the WSF was gender dynamics," Nadja Millner-Larsen, a recent graduate from New York's Bard College, said. "There was an enormous lack of women on the panels at the social forum. I attended this one panel on the anti globalization movement and at the end of it a lot of women stood up and said, 'How can we create another world when we don't have healthy gender dynamics in these panels?'"

"Some of the men said, 'Okay, we should pay attention to this.' But others on the panel had this age-old response that been going on in the left since the sixties. They said, well, classes aren't equally represented, nor race, therefore you shouldn't be so outraged by the under-representation of women."

"This is skirting around the issue," Millner-Larsen continued. "If a black person in a white audience asked why there aren't black people on a panel, the speakers wouldn't say, 'Relax there aren't any women either.' Here we are thirty years later and we are still arguing class and gender against women ... it's shocking. To allow this unequal gender distribution to be sanctioned within the official forum obviously has this kind of trickle down effect in the youth camp."

In addition to hundreds of robberies and numerous fights in the Youth Camp, rapes were reported there as well. "There was a high level of violence in the Youth Camp, Millner-Larsen explained. I felt more scared there than I really have traveling anywhere else. I got the sense that being alone in the camp was a really dangerous thing."

Another controversy this year was the drafting of a manifesto of demands and proposals, which was strange for an event that prides itself on not making demands. The points of the manifesto included the promotion of equitable forms of trade, the implementation of anti-discrimination policies for minorities and women and demanding debt cancellation for third world nations. It was created by 19 high profile WSF activists and writers including Nobel literature laureate Jose Saramago, Le Monde Diplomatique director, Ignacio Ramonet, and Uruguayan writer, Eduardo Galeano.

For some, the manifesto was a healthy step for an event many believed had been counterproductive. "It's not possible to continue to say 'another world is possible' if we do not make some proposals about how to reach this other world," said Ricardo Petrella, one of the presenters at the press conference on the manifesto.

Others believed that 19 intellectuals deciding what 200,000 people believed in contradicted the WSF principles. Brazilian International Committee member Cândido Grzybowski, was unhappy with the decision to create the manifesto and refused to sign it. "The contents of this proposal are perfect, and I believe 80 percent of the forum participants would agree with it," Grzybowski said in an interview with TerraViva. "What kills this proposal is the method with which it was created and presented ... It goes against the very spirit of the forum. Here, all proposals are equally important and not only that of a group of intellectuals, even when they are very significant persons."

Leo Kuehberger didn't believe the WSF manifesto had much significance. "The WSF is a process that cannot be controlled by anyone. I don't care what the results of the forums are. Maybe most people don't care about these proposal or points. No one looks at these things and says, 'Oh, we should concentrate on that this year.' It is not about the results on the micro-level. There may be results on paper, but most people care about results made in a personal way, a direct, person-to-person experience."

The day after the forum, the circus left Porto Alegre. People packed up their tents, stuffing numerous pamphlets and dirty clothes into their backpacks. Artists, musicians, writers and students piled back into buses and cars for the long ride home. Sweaty activists with laptops under their arms boarded planes, some leaving the palm trees and samba to return to snow and subzero temperatures.

Next year, the WSF is scheduled to be spread out in regional forums around the world, and in 2007 it will take place in Africa. For many, it is difficult to say what the future might have in store for the WSF, whether its popularity and significance will fade, or whether its organizational aspects will change dramatically. "Now it is an open situation, everything is possible," Kuehberger explained. "Maybe in two years there will be no social forum, or maybe it is growing. We're in a very open situation."

Gustavo Orego works with a participatory democracy NGO in his home town of Rosario, Argentina and has been to four of the social forums. "When the forum stops being a necessity, people will stop going," he explained. "The forum is not an end, it is a medium. Now it is a necessary encounter." ☆

** Asked that their last name not be used for this article*

Benjamin Dangl is the editor of www.UpsideDownWorld.org, an on-line magazine about activism and politics

Two years ago, on an otherwise random day in Texas, the ethnic scales finally tipped. So-called minorities became the majority in the state for the first time since Texas was part of Mexico. The Census Bureau reported, without much fanfare, that the numerical presence of whites was no longer as great as that of the masses of Asian, Latino, Native, and African descendants in the Lone Star State.

words J.D. Pleucker

illustration Brandon Bauer

Today, the state infamous for executing the most prisoners is also poised to become the face of a new progressive America as blacks, Latinos, and other people of color increasingly take on positions of power in government. It would feel good to say it ain't George Bush's Texas any more — but it wouldn't be true.

Even though the population of Texas is rapidly changing, the old ways remain — and Texas-style populism has a lot to do with it. Now a folksy, down-to-earth style sported by both conservatives and progressives, Texas populism began as a multiracial, leftist political movement in central Texas farm country in the late 1800s.

A century later, President George W. Bush popularized the right-wing version of Texas populism, wearing cowboy boots and inviting European leaders to discuss world security at his sprawling Crawford, Texas, ranch. With philosophical and historical roots in the worst of Texas racial hatred, conservative Texas populists like President Bush and Karl Rove are hard at work exporting Texas-style inequalities and biases to far-flung reaches of the globe. Their more right-wing cousins include groups like the Republic of Texas militia, who advocate for the indepen-

dence of Texas from the rest of the country, alleging that the United States illegally stole Texas in the 19th century.

The progressive take on Texas populism is one that does not get nearly as much mainstream attention, but has achieved widespread recognition in progressive circles. National figures like Jim Hightower and Molly Ivins have managed to gain a foothold in the progressive community, projecting their own brand of what Texas is all about. They write and organize with a Texas twang, sporting cowboy hats, boots, and spurs — just like the president they despise — but recalling an earlier, extensive tradition of left-wing populist organizing that once made Texas known around the country for its groundbreaking progressive activism.

However, the reach of left populism has diminished over the years. "The present day reality is that, for the most part, populism in Texas has been hijacked by the radical right; their takeover of the Texas Republican party in the late 1980s and 1990s was indeed a grassroots revolution," David Van Os, a statewide progressive Democrat leader who ran for a Texas Supreme Court seat in 2004, said.

"Populism has been co-opted and turned into a brand by the right," historian Neil Foley

a New Tradition of Texas Populism is on the Horizon



added. "I don't think people think of the 19th century Populist Party when they say populism. Populism today is why the first George Bush used to take his jacket off and roll up his sleeves: to look like a regular guy, at least until people found out he had no idea what the price of milk was or what a swiping machine was." Foley and others argue that the right in Texas has been more successful than the left at appropriating and selling the language and imagery of populism. It has become the Bush attitude, a brand to sell the Republican Party.

The Bush family is able to do this even though they are not even from Texas, born in Connecticut and transplanted to the state from the northeast in order to exploit the oil wealth of the state. They may be born yankees, but they have managed to exploit the imagery of Texas populism for their own ends.

The Roots of the Populist Divide

In the late 1800s, populism had an agrarian base, rooted in the injustices that black, white, and Mexican small farmers faced on their land. Greedy banks were lending farmers money at outrageous rates and the railroad barons were profiting off transporting the bounty of their labor.

The Texas populist movement fought and achieved some of the first industry regulations in the United States. Gregg Cantrell, a historian currently writing a book on the Texas Populist Party of the 1890s, said, "Many of the policies that the Populist Party advocated became Democratic Party orthodoxy — the direct election of senators, going off the gold standard, federal farm support programs. We got all of these by the time of the New Deal in the 1940s."

Some of the most hotly debated issues, and most relevant for 21st century multira-

cial Texas, are the racial positions taken by those early Populists. Neil Foley, professor at University of Texas-Austin and author of the book *The White Scourge*, has researched the lives of poor black, Mexican, and white cotton farmers in central Texas during this period. "There were cross-racial alliances in this period, particularly between African-Americans and whites, that serve as a startling example," Foley said. "The alliances were very temporary and fragile in part because of the power of white supremacy as an ideology and as a set of cultural practices." However, despite the challenges, multiracial groups of farmers were able to, at some key moments. "Unite and Fight," as a popular Populist slogan put it.

This agrarian radical movement largely ended after 1896 when the Populist Party nationally decided to back the Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryant. When Bryant lost, it brought about the demise of the Populist Party, sparking a radical racial backlash. Populist leaders in Texas like Tom Watson and Cyclone Davis (who worked for racial unity in the 1890s, going so far as to fend off lynch mobs attacking black Populists) blamed African Americans for the defeat. As Cantrell explains, "This is where we get populists like George Bush and David Duke — really the right wing populism has its roots in that backlash after the turn of the century."

Right-wing populism went on to gain a firm hold on Texas politics, but the original farmers and working people who organized and struggled for justice across color lines in the 1890s provided the base for the Texas progressive populist tradition.

"The thing to remember is that for almost the whole 20th century Texas was a one-party state: Democratic," Cantrell said. This meant that the Texas Democratic Party was home to

a wildly divergent set of political ideologies — from the arch conservatives to arch liberals — but the conservative wing of the party always remained dominant.

The minority in the Democratic Party was the liberal wing — identified most closely with the 1950s U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough, the only southern senator to vote for all civil rights bills between 1957 and 1970. "Ralph Yarborough was almost the lone genuine progressive who managed to get elected to office in the 20th century in Texas," Cantrell said. "He warrants the label of the heir to the Texas populist tradition of the 1890s primarily because of his stands for racial justice." Yarborough's campaign slogan summed up his egalitarian platform: "Let's put the jam on the lower shelf so the little people can reach it."

Texas populist traditions in 2005?

There are people working today who self-consciously see themselves as the descendants of Yarborough and the Populist Party of the 1890s. In addition to Jim Hightower and Molly Ivins who work as writers and media agitators, there are institutions like *Texas Observer* magazine that carry on the legacy. Ronnie Dugger, its founding editor, wrote about the Texas Populist tradition and described it as "part of the never-ending revolt of people everywhere against embedded privilege and power."

Activists in the Texas Progressive Populist Caucus of the Democratic Party have fought to revive the tradition through organizing statewide since 2002. As Stan Merriman, its chairperson, said, "The contemporary message of populism is economic justice." The caucus fights to preserve populism's legacy, but without much electoral success so far.

continued next page

At the Edge of America by Dan Gordon

How many teeth can a man lose before he stops smiling? This was the question running through my mind as I met Luis Felipe Rodriguez at the edge of America, in the trenches of Tijuana. Luis's mouth was a testament to the desperate urge for survival that only airplane crash survivors and border crossers can understand. Gaps as jagged and random as the terrain below filled his mouth, his few remaining teeth perched like Border Patrol vans on the rocky slopes of his gums.

His skin was the color and feel of an old baseball mitt as I shook his hand, and a jailhouse tattoo of his initials was fading in the space between his thumb and index finger. His wiry body was straddling a boy's BMX bike that was ridiculously too small for him, causing his legs to flop over the edges and drag in the mud under him. But it wouldn't have surprised me a bit if he suddenly turned around, winked, and biked across the concrete basin below us, catching air at the basin's lip and sailing over the corrugated steel wall on the other side. Nothing could stop Luis. He had snuck across the border 15 times, and each time he had been sent back. He spent six years as a prisoner in Otay Mesa, the steel mousetrap where immigrants are held after being run down by the Border Patrol and wrestled to the ground like animals. These

days Luis lives in a concrete drain pipe that empties into the dry skeleton of the Tijuana River. During the dry season the tunnel provided shelter, but on a day like today the rain turns their homes into death traps. During a storm the other week his friends fell asleep and never woke up, trapped between a grate and a wall of water. The irony was that when the waters finally receded they carried their bodies to the other side. In death, they had finally made it across.

Today it is raining again, and Luis's adopted family of outcasts is huddled against the border. As the rain falls harder they mumble amongst themselves, realizing that this 2,000 mile border is good for nothing, not even keeping them dry.

The others were all trudging back down the hill and piling into the heated van, motioning for me to come. With a knot of guilt I waved to Luis as he disappeared over the top of the ridge.

"I'll see you in Americ—" he shouted, but I slammed the van door, embarrassed that I had begun to cry. As we pulled away he waved goodbye, defiant, as he straddled the top of the hill in the middle of the downpour. After all, how wet can a man get before he just can't get any wetter? ☆

Cantrell, commenting on the Hightower-Ivins camp, said, "They are the last corporal's guard of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party." These old timers need some back up (or even replacements) if Texas is going to have any kind of hopeful future.

Fortunately, numerous younger organizers and thinkers — primarily people of color in cities across Texas — are reassessing and reinventing Texas populism for the new century. There are those who fiercely identify as Texans, reflecting the fact that their families — Native, black, Mexican, and white — have been here for generations and even centuries. Many were reared with a tradition of Texas — Texas history in school and Texas pride at home.

Along with the die-hard natives, there are more recent immigrants to the state who cannot identify with these traditions and bring their own history and struggles into the mix.

Together, these contemporary Texans are deciding which traditions to carry on and which to bury. And the progressive traditions they find might not be the same ones that old-school, cowboy-hat populists might expect.

The '60s race-based movements in Texas — including Chicano movements and urban African American radicalism — brought to the surface all kinds of indigenous radical traditions. The African American movement drew on a long legacy of resistance since slavery, including the black Populists of the

1890s. The Chicano movements built on centuries of resistance, even stretching as far back as the Spanish conquest and indigenous resistance to pacification in Texas. In a new people-of-color-majority Texas, these traditions can only move into the mainstream.

Diverse communities now make up the *people* of populism, so populism in Texas will have to change with them. "Populism is meaningless in Texas unless it is defined by the new immigrant communities in Texas, who are overwhelmingly Mexican," said Tamara Jones, board member for a Houston arts organization, Voices Breaking Boundaries, and a longtime progressive activist.

"If you go to the East End (a historic Latino neighborhood in Houston), how many people know about Jim Hightower's writing? I love it, but it speaks to a very narrow and shrinking population — a very elite population. That is the challenge, not just the changing demographics, but also the failure to ground [populism] and redefine it in new communities," Jones said. "What it demonstrates is the disconnect between the people who know that tradition and who speak that tradition and who are most visible on the one hand, and the people who define the populist in populism."

The culture and politics of average Texans have already changed and the effects are already beginning to be seen. The voters of Tarrant County (which includes Dallas)

elected a Democratic lesbian Latina sheriff in November. In Houston, Democrat Hubert Vo unseated a 26-year incumbent good-old-boy Republican, becoming the first Vietnamese American to win a statewide seat in Texas. He managed to win in a district that has become one of the most diverse in the state — with Chinese characters as prominent on the street as English letters, Vietnamese eateries. South Asian temples and mosques, a diverse array of Latin Americans, and a growing African population.

The new multiracial Texas will define the future of Texas populism. It will undoubtedly draw on historic populist movements in Texas, but it will also bring new and re-discovered traditions to the forefront.

However, since the white minority (the Bushes in particular) controls institutions and government in the state, the majority of people still lack decisive power. As Jones pointed out, "This is a recipe either for revolution or for tyranny." The roots of populism are strong in Texas, but whether the future moves to the left or the right remains to be seen. ★

John Pluecker is a seventh-generation Texan and a writer who is obsessed with the whole Gulf of México region. He welcomes thoughts or comments at jp79@mail.com.

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straightwashing

If it's not enough of an indignity to be resoundingly spanked by the passage of eleven amendments forbidding gay marriage, gay folk are now in the position of reading articles in *The New York Times* announcing that the Human Rights Campaign and other mainstream gay rights organizations are engaged in a "debate over whether they should moderate their goals in the wake of [their] bruising losses." In the face of such a rout at the national level, the mainstream press seems to expect that queers, tails between their legs, will follow the DNC in castigating themselves for promoting any agenda other than that of corporate interests.

What's interesting to consider is how it became plausible for the *Times* and other members of the press to read the success or failure of gay marriage as indicative of the gay rights movement's relative progress. Or, more precisely, why "gay marriage" has come to stand for gay rights, when historically, many of those involved in the gay rights movement have fought not only to achieve sexual freedom, but also to destroy those larger structures of power — classism, racism, and patriarchy — that contribute to the oppression of those who are different. Given the fact that some progressive queers read marriage as symbolic of the very culture they seek to transform, it is not surprising that they see the quest for marriage rights as inherently problematic.

Yet it can also be said that because the Right so successfully used the threat of gay marriage to galvanize voters in the re-election campaign of President Bush, those working in mainstream gay rights organizations were compelled to respond: the gay community was under attack. And, following the truism that "no publicity is bad publicity," it made sense for them to re-appropriate the negative attention by demonstrating that gay and lesbian couples deserve the rights granted to their straight married analogs. As stories about gay marriage crowded out reporting on other issues that could have been the central focus of the movement, the debate about marriage, either by default or by choice, appeared to be the main concern of gay people as much as the Christian fundamentalist base. At the pride parade in Atlanta last summer, for example, almost all of the floats focused on marriage, and participants threw intertwined rings to the spectators to remind them of the Christian Coalition's efforts to pass a constitutional amendment forbidding gay marriage.

Although it makes sense that mass spectacles, such as Pride Parades, would respond to the dominant depiction of gays through camp and resistance, the very success of the Right in commandeering the rhetoric about marriage served to exacerbate an already existing tension in the gay rights movement. What has happened among the queer community in the last two years is that the question of gay marriage has become attached to a larger debate between radical and assimilationist camps about the political priorities of

words Rebecca Hyman
illustration Allison Cole

the movement. Should queers focus their attention on the way they are depicted in mainstream culture, seeking dispensation from the larger straight world, or should they work to achieve rights by transforming American culture as a whole? Books like Jonathan Rauch's *Gay Marriage: Why its Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*, for example, argue that "same sex marriage extends and clarifies the mission" of marriage by "shoring up the key values and commitments on which couples and families and society depend." Others, like Mattilda, aka Matt Bernstein Sycamore, editor of *That's Revolting!: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* find it "ironic that the central sign of straight conformity is seen as the pre-eminent goal of the gay rights movement." For radicals like Mattilda, marriage is a signifier of class privilege, a way of dividing a particular version of gay identity from the larger queer community. Among queers, the prospect of gay moms or dads, cheerily waving from the windows of suitably bumper-stickered Volvos, seems to evoke either heartwarming ideas of social progress or the urge to vomit and throw rocks. (hee hee!)

What does a gay family look like?

The Human Rights Campaign is a nonpartisan organization devoted to advancing "equality based on sexual orientation and gender expression" and ensuring that GLBT Americans "can be open, honest, and safe at home and at work." With a membership of nearly 600,000 and an annual budget of 30 million dollars, it is the largest and most wealthy gay rights organization in the nation. Its task is twofold: to lobby the federal government to include the needs of GLBT individuals and families in national legislation, and to support state gay rights organizations in their efforts to lobby the legislature and overturn anti-gay laws and ordinances. Last year, according to Seth Kilbourn, Director of the Marriage Project, the HRC gave 1.7 million dollars to state gay rights organizations and devoted 1.6 million dollars to its education and get out the vote efforts.

When the HRC decided to lobby for marriage rights, therefore, it sent a strong signal to other organizations that gay marriage should be the issue around which the gay movement should coalesce, and many, such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, followed suit. The HRC created an ad campaign as a central component of their lobbying efforts, running the ads in newspapers and periodicals with a readership potentially sympathetic to gay and lesbian rights.

The ads — black and white photographs of gay couples — are beautiful, and have a visual and textual consistency. One ad depicts a white lesbian couple sitting under a tree with their daughter, another an interracial lesbian couple who stand with their heads resting lightly against one another, and yet another a "senior" white lesbian couple who sit on a park bench holding hands. The text accompanying the photos explains that "Anna and Marion are worried about losing their house," whereas "Jo and Teresa don't qualify for full social security survivor benefits even after a lifetime of paying taxes." Marriage, the ads explain, will save these families from troubles straight couples never have to face. Implicit in this stylized representation of gay families is the argument that gay people deserve marriage rights because they are "just like you," with the implied receiver of the advertisement a straight, middle-class professional who is either already married or aspires to be. The tacit link between the viewer and the people in the photographs is their shared notion of what it means to be a family — quite literally, of what a family looks like.

Though the ads are attuned to the multicultural spectrum of gay and lesbian couples, they are silent on the issue of class. The message is clear: gays and lesbians work hard, save money, buy houses, have children — in short, want to achieve the American Dream — and they deserve its benefits because they pay their taxes like everyone else. To be fair to the HRC, it's important to remember that the ad campaign was designed not only to persuade viewers to vote against anti-gay

marriage amendments, but also to counter the propaganda put forth by groups like James Dobson's Focus on the Family. When you're in an image war, it makes sense to fight fire with fire — for every freshly-scrubbed Christian family, HRC substitutes an impeccable pair of gay men, designer pants neatly pressed, beaming proudly at their twins.

What's lost in all this attention to the politics of representation, however, is the long-term impact these images have on the gay community and the element of the straight world that chooses to valorize them. By arguing that gay couples deserve the recognition and rights conferred on those who are married, HRC and others have also chosen to create a particular image of gay culture, one palatable to straight people because the realm of difference exists in the space of the private. Because most Americans believe in the right to privacy, and because the Supreme Court overturned *Bowers v. Hardwick*, making sodomy legal, HRC strategically evokes the law of the land to buttress the arguments for gay marriage. Because gay couples differ from straight couples only in the realm of sexual object choice, the campaign implicitly argues, they should not be subject to discrimination.

In this sense, the argument for gay marriage becomes not only a discussion about rights, but also about the distinctiveness of gay people. If to be gay is just about a sex act, and now a legal one at that, then discrimination against gay people becomes merely a matter of sexual prudery. Anyone who is hip enough to realize that sexuality is more than the missionary position, it would seem, should be able to support gay marriage, and by extension, full gay rights.

But it is precisely this argument that denies the radical diversity of queer culture, and the fact that queer identity, for most who embrace it, implies far more than sexuality.

By representing the family as a nuclear unit composed of a couple and their children, the HRC's ads tacitly reinforce the definition of the family that fundamentalist Christians have claimed is under attack. Sociologists have long demonstrated that the notion of marriage and the family that is currently celebrated by conservatives is inherently white and middle-class, doesn't represent the majority of family structures in the country, and is a recent invention. While it is hardly shocking that conservatives are claiming an ahistorical definition of the family as a way to promote a very contemporary agenda, it is notable that when gays and lesbians share this definition, they erase the diverse models of the family that are one of the hallmarks of queer culture. In this sense, even as they fight for the rights for gay and lesbian couples, the HRC and others capitulate to the idea that the conservative definition of the family is the ideal standard to which all others hope to conform.

Rauch builds on this argument by maintaining that established couples benefit society by making a commitment to care for one another. Because this commitment is difficult, those who do the work should receive special benefits. To the straight eye, gay culture appears to suffer from "a case of Peter Pan syndrome," he concedes, but "marriage says . . . if you will make a commitment, you will receive the legal recognition and special status which only marriage brings. If you assume the responsibilities of adulthood, you will get the prerogatives." If those who are "adults" deserve special status, then by extension, those who are single or who live in communal living arrangements do not. Rather than arguing that all people deserve healthcare, for example, Rauch and others contend that married people, by virtue of their relationships, deserve more rights.

When I posed this challenge to Seth Kilbourn, he told me that "the healthcare system is broken" and that HRC "wants to be a part of any debate" about reforming the system. The question becomes, what would happen if all the money raised to promote gay marriage was instead used to lobby for universal healthcare?

Gay Sex Doth Not a Queer Make

For Mattilda, who quipped that HRC should stand for "homogenous ruling class," the choice to make marriage the centerpiece of gay

rights is "frightening" because it demonstrates the power those in mainstream organizations have to allocate resources and to choose which segments of the larger queer community will receive the greatest benefits. What has happened to the gay community, he asks, when queer residents of the now valuable Castro neighborhood of San Francisco protest the building of a shelter for homeless queer youth because it compromises their property values? It is only those who already have class privilege and property, he argues, who are able to attain full social equality when granted the rights linked to marriage. "Why are homelessness and police brutality not queer issues?" he asks, and why does the movement not fight to overthrow the systems of power that discriminate against many people, rather than just queers?

Among queers, the argument for gay marriage not only implies a set of assumptions about class privilege and political priorities, but also has become inseparable from the question of representation. Because gay people lack the numbers and financial power to attain civil rights, they must petition straight culture to be recognized. Galling as this proposition is, it immediately raises the question of what it means to be gay, in the eyes of the straight world and then in the eyes of queers. To say that being gay is only about sexual object choice is to argue within the narrowest possible parameters. There is no need to engage the question of *why* married people deserve health benefits and those in other communal living arrangements do not. There is no need to define marriage, and there is no argument about what it means to be queer. Instead, gay people become straight people who love someone of the same sex. Those who are transsexual or who refuse a fixed notion of gender identity are not only left out of the current discussion, they would have to create a completely separate set of arguments to defend their civil rights.

If to celebrate marriage is, symbolically, to celebrate a traditional notion of the American Dream, then those queers who reject gay marriage are also often rejecting a particular notion of being — one associated with whiteness, with class privilege, with suburbia, with monogamy, with children, with property. It is the wholesale rejection of American individualism, in fact, that is frequently the subtext of the dissent, among queers, to the arguments for gay marriage. It is clearly inconceivable to some Americans that there are those who might not order their lives along this particular path *by choice*, rather than by disenfranchisement. There are certainly many queers who *do* long for a traditional conception of marriage and the family and are denied these structures because they are different. And there are many queers who are, in most respects, indistinguishable from their straight neighbors.

But what is important is that many who embrace a notion of queer identity to queer not only sexuality but also being believe that queer culture is vastly superior to that of the straight world and is in danger of losing its voice under the marketing blitz created by the queer wedding industry. The question becomes, what would happen if all people were granted the rights accrued to marriage, and not just couples? What would happen if the greatest, most exorbitant fantasies of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell actually came true? In what ways would American culture be radically changed not by the mainstreaming of virtually straight couples, but by the queering of America? I suppose the question I am asking, one impossible to answer, is the extent to which the queer subculture is alternative in a creative or a reactive sense. It seems that these questions have yet to be raised, precisely because those who identify as queer want no part of mainstream culture, and those who want in are willing, it seems, to sacrifice at least some of their privileges of difference. ★

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BORN IN FLAMES

Abby Sewell

In 1983, director Lizzie Borden's feminist sci-fi classic, *Born in Flames*, imagined a future 10 years after the socialist revolution, and concluded that in a utopian state run by white men, women and minorities would still be ignored and abused. In her vision, a group of women join forces to take over the state-owned media and create their own revolution.

With this idea in mind, a group of progressive activists in Portland, Oregon are organizing the Born in Flames Conference, a three-day event dealing with sexual assault from a radical perspective. The conference is set to take place at Portland State University, from June 24 to 26, 2005, and will encompass a wide range of workshops, speakers, and discussion forums. The organizers include women, transgendered people, and men, and the event is open to all sexual assault survivors and supportive, concerned community members.

In the more mainstream circles of universities and non-profit organizations, conferences on sexual assault are not hard to find. But in the radical-left community, the discussion has usually been relegated to workshops within conferences focusing on sexism (A Different Kind of Dudefest in Washington, DC), queer and transgendered issues, or race issues (the Anarchist People of Color Conference).

According to Born in Flames Conference organizer Lauren Hartley, there was a large upswing in organizing around sexual assault issues in Portland's radical/punk community about two years ago. At that time, activists began discussing the idea of holding a conference on sexual assault. This year the conference is becoming a reality.

The first day of the event will focus on defining sexual assault and dispelling some of the myths. The second day will address ways the community can support survivors of sexual assault. The third will deal with accountability. Workshop topics include consent, self defense, and survivor advocacy, among others.

Hartley said, "I feel like in the community there's a lot of lack of knowledge of basic survivor support—basic things like you always believe the survivor—which in the world of social services you would learn on day one."

One of the most difficult problems to address has been the issue of how to deal with sexual assault perpetrators who are part of the radical community, and who, in many cases, don't believe their actions qualify as assault. In the United States, the vast majority of rapes and attempted rapes are committed by someone the victim knows—a friend, an acquaintance, a partner or former partner. The situation is no different in the insular punk and activist scenes. And, when alcohol and clouded judgment are added to the situation, the line between consent and coercion becomes very thin.

Activists who experience sexual assault are often unwilling to go to the police because of their own opposition to the authorities and, in some cases, because they fear being ostracized by their friends. In these cases, radical communities have to find their own methods of holding perpetrators accountable.

Portland's most vocal anti-sexual assault collective, Hysteria, some of whose members are planning the Born in Flames Conference, has made a practice of confronting accused perpetrators at punk shows and other public events. One of the main tactics Hysteria has pursued is the promotion of "Safer Space Policies." Places and events that want to be known as safer spaces post a written statement to say they will not allow discriminatory and oppressive behaviors. The policy also states, "Known sexual perpetrators are not welcome at any time."

Hartley admits the problem of dealing with perpetrators who may be our friends and fellow activists is a problem no one has yet been able to deal with effectively. "If they're ostracized, they maybe just leave the community and go somewhere else and don't have to deal with their behavior."

She and other Born in Flames organizers hope the conference can provide a space for people from all over the country to discuss issues like these in a way that is constructive rather than divisive.

"I hope this can be a space where all different kinds of people can come together and share experiences and create a place for discussion and education," said organizer Sage Dillon.

For more information or to get involved in the conference, e-mail: borninflamesconference@yahoo.com



The March for Women's Lives (Spring 2004) Photo by Diane Greene Lent

Basketball, *Bitch*, and Beyond

THIS MOMENT IN THIRD WAVE HISTORY



1972

Title IX miraculously passes, guaranteeing equal coeducation (translation: no more "bounce the basketball three times and pass" in gym class).

1978

Take Back the Night starts.

1981

RuPaul first appears on "American Music Show," pushing mainstream America to reconsider the strict gender binary

1982

In a Different Voice by Carol Gilligan argues that girls lose their true voices in the school environment

1984

Madonna releases "Like a Virgin" and girls everywhere write on their beds.

1985

The Guerilla Girls, a radical activist group of young feminists pissed off at the sexism permeating the art world, stage theatrical protests.

1987

Jean Kilbourne tours the country with her documentary *Killing Us Softly*. Advertisers' *Image of Women*

1988

The original *Girls' Generation*

1990

Feminist rocker Ani DiFranco starts Righteous Babe Records.

1991

Anita Hill testifies against Clarence Thomas at his Senate Confirmation Hearings. The riot grrrl movement emerges out of the punk music scene, and homemade zines touting feminism with a torn edge proliferate. Naomi Wolf publishes *The Beauty Myth*.

1992

Tai Edut launches a multicultural feminist magazine called *HUES*. *Black Is Beautiful* Sisters & It Passes Time

When I was about 14 years-old and hopelessly inept at getting my frizzy hair to lie flat or my best friend, who was already sexually active, to use a condom, I reluctantly started pulling feminist books off my mom's shelf. I was looking for a lot of things: comfort, answers, but, ultimately, I was really looking for identity.

I didn't find it. I found a lot of middle-aged women writing about the ERA and the GNP and none of it meant anything to me. When I heard the term "third wave feminism," the light went on.

Lisa Jervis, co-founder of Bitch magazine, recently wrote of the term "third wave" in Ms.: "We've reached the end of the wave terminology's usefulness. What was at first a handy-dandy way to refer to feminism's history and its present and future potential with a single metaphor has become shorthand that invites intellectual laziness, an escape hatch from the hard work of distinguishing between core beliefs and a cultural moment."

But I can't help thinking about that frizzy-haired girl back in Colorado Springs who discovered a movement, and in the process, herself by virtue of that name and all the newness that it suggested. "Third wave," like hip-hop, was mine, not my mother's, and at 14 that really meant something.

Certainly all third wavers, like all feminists, don't share the same core beliefs. One of my best friends is a Republican scientist, another is a Palestinian Muslim who adores Elvis and Martin Scorsese, plays a bright pink electric guitar, and is dead set against abortion. These women are part of my movement, no matter how divergent our views.

It is not our views that connect us. It is our approach, our shared cultural influences. We email, IM, blog. We are open-eyed and hungry. We are children of Madonna's lacy gloves and Queen Latifah's

"Who you calling a bitch?" We played sports or cheered on girlfriends who did. We search the Internet for our answers.

Is this enough common ground to constitute a country of our own? I think so.

In an effort to respond to Jervis's call to avoid "intellectual laziness," I have attempted to create a survey of third wave feminism. It is intended to be a question, not an answer.

I begin with Title IX because I believe it is the policy change that echoed most widely and most profoundly among our generation. According to a recent issue of *O Magazine*, 1 in 27 high school girls played sports in 1972, but today 1 in 2.5 does. I then chose what I see as the most captivating and influential cultural markers of our time — the TV moments that became iconic, the books that reached an audience wider than Women's Studies circles, the direct action that transcended one time or place. I also try to draw on a variety of genres — music, books, magazine, television, government, and film — and public spaces — from suburbia to the city, hip-hop to folk rock, the basketball court to the Senate floor. Finally, I end with Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richard's new book, *Grassroots*, because I believe their message is representative of where we are headed: a movement where emailing your friend information on the latest natural birth methods is as valued as marching on the Mall.

I look forward to seeing your additions and revisions. For what are we if not the generation that talks back? ☆

Courtney E. Martin is a writer, teacher, and filmmaker in Brooklyn, New York. You can read more about her zany projects and good works at www.courtneyemartin.com.

^ third wave Surveying the Feminist Landscape

by Courtney E. Martin

1993

Debbie Stohler and Marcelle Karp found *Bust* "for women with something to get off their chests."

1995

Rebecca Walker, badass daughter of Alice, edits *To Be Real*.

1996

The Third Wave Foundation is founded. Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler start *Bitch Magazine*.

1997

The first Lilith Fair sweeps the country. The WNBA tips off. Editors Leslie Haywood and Jennifer Drakes publish *Third Wave Agenda*. Naomi Wolf and radio producer Margot Magowan co-found The Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" premieres.

1998

The unstoppable Eve Ensler produces *V-Day*, a celebrity-packed relaunch of her *Vagina Monologues*, to raise money to end violence against women. *Time* puts Clarista Flockhart on the cover and lamely asks "Is Feminism Dead?" "Sex in the City" debuts on HBO.

2000

Third wave leaders Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards publish *Manifesta*. *Appetites* by Caroline Knapp and *Body Outlaws* by Ophira Edut and Walker illuminate the complicated psychology behind eating disorders. The Burlesque Revival Association starts, and women strip down in the name of sexy empowerment. Hilary Swank wins an Oscar for her unparalleled performance in *Boys Don't Cry*.

2003

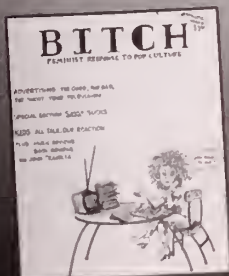
Sarah Jones wins her suit against the FCC for censoring her poem "Your Revolution" an attack on political revolutionaries who hypocritically disrespect women.

2004

The March for Women's Lives draws over a million to the steps of the anti-choice White House. Editors Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin publish *The Fire This Time*. Global activist Jensine Larsen founds *World Pulse* magazine. The "I Had an Abortion" project shocks and awes.

2005

Baumgardner and Richards publish their second book, *Grassroots*.



A Troubled Tradition

Caitlin Corrigan

can Irish women keep a place for peace?

In the spring of 1996, "The Troubles" of Northern Ireland had already claimed 3,000 lives, despite numerous negotiations and ceasefire attempts. The most recent manifestation of a centuries-old conflict between Protestants and Catholics, the time known as "The Troubles" began after the initially peaceful civil rights movements of the 1960s turned increasingly violent, and carried on well into the 1990s. By 1996, Northern Ireland's leaders were ready for some real change, organizing elections for a round of peace talks with representatives from all geographic areas and political and paramilitary affiliations. With this new, comprehensive approach to peacekeeping, how then could these leaders possibly overlook a grand 51 percent of their constituency?

By not including any women on the candidate lists.

Lucky for Northern Ireland, Monica McWilliams and nearly 100 other women were already organizing the fight for representation in what would prove to be some of most productive negotiations in the peacemaking process. McWilliams and her colleagues lobbied the major parties to include women in the talks, but after having their requests ignored, they decided to form their own party. With just seven weeks to get out the vote, the Northern

was decidedly different from the often divisive and exclusionary political climate that has become tradition in Northern Ireland. During the nearly two years of deliberations, the women of the NIWC introduced fresh perspectives and pushed for common ground. However, gaining basic respect from fellow parties sometimes proved a daily challenge. In a 1997 article in *Insight on the News*, McWilliams responded to reports of Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) members verbally abusing NIWC reps during the talks, going so far as to "moo" when the women entered the chambers or during speeches. "The violence of their tongues," she says, "has led to others picking up guns."

This connection between political sectarianism and street violence shows just how difficult breaking tradition can be when years of binary conflict serve to strengthen existing divisions in a community like Northern Ireland, promoting a male, nationalist homogeneity that pervades even the politics of peace. The NIWC's commitment to breaking up some of the old ways lasted throughout the 22 month talks, which ultimately resulted in the Belfast Agreement (or Good Friday Agreement) in 1998.

"The NIWC played a key role in promoting the Agreement," writes Kate Fearon in issue 13 of *Accord: An*

International Review of Peace Initiatives.

After the Agreement was created, it was voted into reality by a public referendum with citizens' overwhelming approval. The NIWC played a part in educating voters,

demonstrating an ability "to speak simultaneously to a number of constituencies: nationalist and unionist, organized civil society and individual members of the public."

The NIWC's strength comes from this willingness to defy convention, simply by seeking out unheard perspectives on the issues. "I thirst to hear their voice and put myself in their shoes," McWilliams says in *Insight*. "To me that is knowledge that builds for change. I have to build a new country and that means getting together with people who don't share my point of view."

As a young, fourth-generation Irish-American woman visiting Belfast last summer, I learned firsthand about the community, finding warm welcome from the less conven-

tional side of Belfast. Traveling with my friend Maura, we negotiated our way carefully at first, learning to stay away from the university area with its homogenous packs of women in skinny high heels and groups of loud men who shouted to us, inexplicably, in French. We puzzled over our new-found exoticism — did we actually look that foreign? Or was the sight of two women laughing loudly and walking alone at night so much of a departure from the social norms of a city whose buildings still show murals of martyrs killed in urban war?

The more I learned about the underlying conflict during our stay, the more it seemed we were drawn to those on the sidelines; those who, like the women and other minorities given voice by the NIWC, weren't necessarily participating in the characteristic sectarianism of Belfast, but were affected by it nonetheless. One night we found a group of native Londoners, two Indian girls and a slight, feminine boy who led us to a hidden away hip-hop club after telling us more than a few doormen had turned them away. Another night we met a chatty Dublin girl whose family lived on both sides of the peace line, then a group of feisty old men playing Dixieland jazz in a traditional pub. We also made friends with an employee at our hostel, an Australian expat mother who had plenty to say about women's issues in Ireland — "Their doctors tell them breastfeeding's not healthy! Can you believe it?!"

Tapping into the needs and strengths of these interesting, everyday people fueled the NIWC's early success in getting a wide variety of underrepresented people to seek more active engagement — or at least understanding — from the current political system in Northern Ireland. It seemed like an unstoppable plan. Yet despite hard work, plenty of anonymous donors, and seemingly limitless enthusiasm, the NIWC is barely viable today. Though the two majority parties, republican Sinn Féin and loyalist DUP, now have more female involvement, the NIWC lost much of its funding and its seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly (one of the organizations formed from the Belfast Agreement). Criticism of the NIWC also continued, from DUP members and even members of the media, although their harsh and unfounded critiques better serve the agenda of the NIWC by illustrating how great the ideological divide still spreads.

On one occasion, Newton Emerson wrote in the *Irish News*, "Men commit almost all the violence in Northern Ireland, but now that I'm in my 30s I've noticed something

With a commitment to cross-party equality and mediation guiding their policy-making, the NIWC's approach at the talks was decidedly different from the often divisive and exclusionary political climate that has become tradition in Northern Ireland.

Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was created to contest the June elections. McWilliams, a nationalist, and Pearl Sager, a loyalist, won two seats at the table, with the NIWC coming in as the ninth most popular party in elections throughout all of Northern Ireland.

Writing in *The Observer*, Monica McWilliams says the defining characteristic of the NIWC is their emphasis on inclusion and consensus: "We have a niche as a cross-community party, appealing to Protestants, Catholics, Hindus, atheists, and more. We are acutely conscious that some 14% of people here do not come from Catholic or Protestant traditions and still more are politically homeless."

With a commitment to cross-party equality and mediation guiding their policy-making, the NIWC's approach at the talks

happening to my contemporaries. Men grow out of sectarianism. It's a folly of youth — while the girls go on pursuing their intense, unspoken vendettas for years and years." This is exactly the kind of blame game NIWC members have sought to move past. Without funding or representation, their challenges could be daunting.

Fearon, a founding member of the NIWC herself, writes that though the party was only meant to be temporary, it has had significant effects on the culture of Northern Irish politics at large: "The NIWC's involvement in the negotiations not only facilitated and promoted women's participation, it also demonstrated the possibility that civil society can participate in and influence formal political negotiations. It revealed that politics is not necessarily the exclusive preserve of customary politicians; groups other than those advocating exclusively a nationalist or exclusively a unionist perspective also have a place at the decision-making table."

The emphasis on civil participation reveals a flexibility that in itself is a kind of rebellion, drawing emphasis away from the political powers-that-be, and placing it back into the hands of community leaders, NGOs, and the everyday members of the private sphere who welcomed us outsiders so warmly to Belfast. Without the legitimacy and power of a formal party, though, might outsiders find the traditions of binary conflict still too strong to break?

Protestant Baroness May Blood and Catholic Bronagh Hinds don't seem to think so. These two founding NIWC members spoke on BBC's Women's Hour in December 2004, re-stating the importance of involving women in the peace process — a role, says Blood, they've always taken on: "If the true story of Northern Ireland during the years of The Troubles ever comes to be truly written, women will have a large part of that story to tell. I can think of thousands of women throughout Northern Ireland who, through

the darkest days, held their community together and worked across the peace line."

"We may have an agreement," adds Hinds, "but peace gets built bit by bit, and we have to address things still within our own communities and across the communities, even things that we are denying and not addressing now, and women will have a big role to play in that."

Further Reading:

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition website, www.niwc.org

Women's Work: The Story of the Women's Coalition, by Kate Fearon, Blackstaff Press.

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FEATURED: SEX AND GENDER MEDIA

m2F: A Journey in Gender Identity DVD

Produced, Directed, and Edited by Dee McLachlan and Patricia Church
Pangaea Films, 52 minutes plus extras, 2003
Distributed by National Film Network, www.nationalfilmnetwork.com
www.m2fgender.com

m2F is an informative and powerful statement on gender dysphoria that might make some viewers smile in the end.

Produced by two transsexual women and narrated by Jon Faine, this documentary from Australia and New Zealand — and its companion website — feature personal stories, professional discussions, and contemporary debates concerning the lives of transgendered, transsexual, intersexual, and cross-dressing people. It uniquely combines the public and the private, the personal and the political to create one of the most provocative teaching tools on the subject of people living the struggles (and pleasures) of gender identity.

Refusing to define transsexualism and transgenderism, m2F instead presents a number of personal testimonies, a large amount of new medical and psychological research, and a cross-cultural history of gender dysphoria to challenge stereotypes and encourage viewers to keep asking questions. (The website is especially helpful in this regard because it provides a set of links to help readers inform their own definitions and responses.)

Former sex worker and nominated best actress, Georgina Beyer, the world's first known transgendered Member of Parliament (from New Zealand), leads an impressive list of "ordinary" transsexual and transgendered women interviewed in this video. Father of three daughters and Naval Captain Sarah Parry, convener of Transgender Victoria and geneticist and politician Julie Peters, Human Rights Advocate Roslyn Houston, and others tell their stories here. Their personal histories are inspirational. They are sometimes very similar and sometimes very different, challenging all the stereotypes. They talk of their complex sexuality and evolving professional and familial relations. They recall regrets as well as hopes. Other women talk of their struggles with schooling or the medical profession. Some discuss their difficult relationships with established religion or disastrous counselors from their pasts. Lauren, Sally, and Jay appear in the studio of their long-running radio program, "Transmission Time" (Joy Melbourne), where they engage in sometimes serious, sometimes light-hearted discussions of gender identity.

Alongside the personal interviews, the video also features discussions with professors Milton Diamond, who has published extensively on gender and sexuality, and Frank Lewins, who has written on the sociology of transsexualism. Other specialized doctors, experts, politicians, activists, and church officials express a diversity of views on the issues involved with gender and sexuality differences.

Structurally, the feature on the DVD is made up of interviews, talking heads, a few graphics, and gorgeous shots of Australia and New Zealand. It takes its time and lets us grow to know the people it profiles. It also offers its own commentary through the doctors and experts who speak between the personal stories, generalizing and contextualizing the particulars of the ordinary voices. It shows us how wonderfully sexual reassignment surgery has gone for some. It shows us that not everyone who switches genders undergoes sexual reassignment surgery, at least not always completely. It also shows that some people who have undergone the surgery eventually felt it as a mistake. It shows women who are in heterosexual relationships or women who are in homosexual relationships. It lets us hear from parents, friends, and families that sometimes support and sometimes resent the choices these women have made. It shows us how complex this issue has been in history, spotlighting cultures with three, four, seven, and eleven recognized genders. And, it shows us how these issues continue to evolve today.

And this complexity is what makes the video so keen for me. It does not show only one side of any of this subject, although, in the end, it is mostly concerned with the happiness of men who want to live as women. The interviews with an oppositional church voice, gradually accepting parents and siblings, and one wife whose pain comes across as she explains that her children lost a father and she lost a husband did more to help me respond to this subject than any simplistic cheerleading ever could.

Most important of all, then, m2F does not intend to be the final word in any of these journeys. In fact, it does not even attempt to give a holistic look at gender dysphoria as it focuses almost exclusively on biological men who have transitioned one way or another to living as women or to living between genders. Formerly biological women do not enter the conversation here. We can hope, though, that their voices are not too far behind and that f2M will come to our screens very soon.

-Brian Bergen-Aurand

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You Can't Do That on Television!

the conspicuous absence of abortion on TV

words: Rachel Fudge

illustration: Nicole T. Georges

On any given evening, you can turn on the TV and surf past images that not too long ago were considered too shocking, too politically contentious, or too offensive for national broadcast: interracial couples; visibly pregnant women; graphic violence; sex; homosexuality; foul language; even dancing, singing animated feces. Thanks to the rise of reality TV, it's become acceptable to broadcast graphic, gruesome images of real or realistic medical procedures (rhinoplasties, gastric bypasses, and autopsies) and gross-out bodily functions (people eating bugs, worms, and rats; people vomiting). You'll undoubtedly witness characters both fictional and real dealing with complicated love triangles, sex, birth, death, betrayal, and more moral conundrums than you can shake your remote at. You might even catch a comedic skit that openly mocks Jesus and God.

But there's one thing you're almost guaranteed not to see on TV, despite the reality of it being one of the most common medical procedures in the US: abortion. As many commentators have pointed out, as all of the old you-can't-do-that-on-television taboos — sexual content, violence, cursing, nudity, homosexuality — have fallen away, abortion is the one hot-button issue that simply remains too hot for TV. Robert Thompson, Director of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture and Television at Syracuse University, describes abortion as being “conspicuous by its absence,” while in a November 2004 *New York Times* article Kate Arthur calls it an “aberration.”

While the public and political discourse around issues like gay rights has dramatically increased over the past 30 years — and subsequently become increasingly visible in popular culture — the discourse around abortion and reproductive rights has actually narrowed, to the point where it has become *more* difficult to introduce the issue of abortion on a TV show than it once was.

The Debut of Reproductive Rights

Way back in 1964 — nearly a decade before *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion nationally — a main character on the soap opera *Another World* got pregnant and had what was referred to as an “illegal operation,” which left her sterile. Shortly after the 1973 *Roe* decision, Susan Lucci’s *All My Children* character had soap opera’s first legal abortion, with none of the health or psychosocial aftereffects (sterility, insanity, murder, etc.) that would come to characterize soap abortions in the future.

But the best-known and most widely viewed pop culture abortion took place in 1972 on *Maude*, the *All in the Family* spinoff starring Bea Arthur as the titular liberal feminist. When 47-year-old Maude, who was married and had a grown daughter, became unexpectedly pregnant, she opted for an abortion, which was legal in New York state at the time. (In a sign of just how different the times were, *Maude*’s producers cooked up the abortion storyline in response to a challenge from the group Zero Population Growth, which was sponsoring a \$10,000 prize for

bombing of an abortion clinic on *C&L* — to touch on the issue.

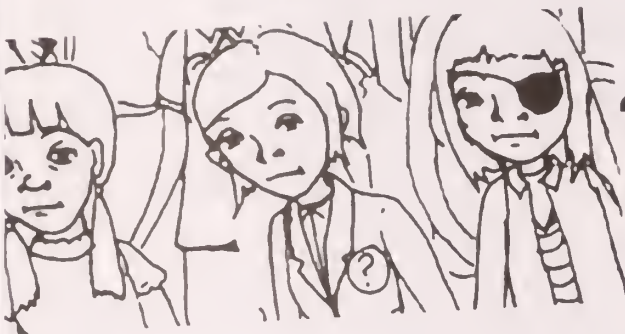
Moral Dilemmas and False Alarms

With the rise of the primetime teen soap (*Beverly Hills 90210*, *Party of Five*, *Dawson’s Creek*) in the mid-’90s, it was inevitable that sexually active teen and young adult characters would be confronted with pregnancy, often in the guise of the Very Special Episode. Enter the convenient miscarriage. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, some 13 percent of unwanted pregnancies end in miscarriage, but on TV that number is much, much higher. The convenient miscarriage goes something like this: Sympathetic lead character gets knocked up. SLC agonizes over what to do, sometimes going so far as to visit an abortion clinic. SLC decides that although she believes in a woman’s right to choose (her boyfriend or best friend most likely feels significantly different, however), she’s going to keep her baby. Moral dilemma resolved, SLC spontaneously miscarries; SLC is sad but realizes that in the end she wasn’t

appear as hallucinations or ghosts on the show all the time). And last summer, a two-part episode of the made-in-Canada teen soap *Degrassi: The Next Generation* made headlines when 14-year-old lead character Manny gets pregnant, has an abortion (saying, “I’m just trying to do the right thing here. For me. For everyone, I guess”), and doesn’t express any regret afterward. Alas, U.S. viewers won’t get to see the show: The Viacom-owned cable channel N, which airs *Degrassi* in the U.S., refused to air it.

Today’s Four-Letter Word

While Maude’s abortion was truly groundbreaking, it inadvertently galvanized the anti-choice movement. When CBS reran the episode six months later, some 40 affiliates refused to air it, and national advertisers shied away from buying ad time, establishing a pattern that remains in effect today. Even more significantly, after the episode first aired anti-abortion leaders took their ease to the Federal Communications Commission, argu-



“I had a convenient miscarriage!”

siteoms that tackled the issue of population control.)

In the wake of *Roe v. Wade*, and as the basic tenets of second-wave feminism seeped into the American mainstream in the ’70s and ’80s, serious adult-oriented dramas like *Hill St. Blues*, *St. Elsewhere*, and *Cagney & Lacey* featured abortions every season or so, as did the occasional soap opera. In the real world, the annual number of abortions steadily increased until 1985, when the abortion rate leveled off. In the late ’80s and early ’90s, in the face of a growing number of legal challenges to *Roe*, a smattering of storylines revisited the specter of illegal abortions, as if to remind us of what was at stake. On Vietnam War era drama *China Beach*, a young nurse named Holly has an illegal abortion; the show’s moral center, leading character Colleen McMurphy, is a staunch Catholic who disapproves of Holly’s actions. Popular shows *Thirtysomething* and *Cagney & Lacey* addressed the issue more obliquely, often using flashbacks to provide some distance from the controversial event or using an extraordinary event — like a

really ready to be a mother anyway. (Alternatively, the pregnancy turns out to be a false alarm, an even more tidy wrap-up to the dilemma.)

The convenient miscarriage false alarm remains the most popular strategy for dodging abortion, as it allows TV producers to congratulate themselves for tackling the tough topics without having to take an actual stand. Recently, however, a handful of shows have approached the issue head-on, even allowing characters to go through with the abortion. But there is always a measure of conflict and moral crisis: A 2003 episode of the WB show *Everwood* turned the issue around, to focus on the moral dilemma of the doctor (the show’s lead character) over whether he can in good conscience perform an abortion; in the end, he decides he can’t do it, and passes the case to a colleague, who does the procedure then heads off to a priest to confess his sins.

Over on HBO, an episode of *Six Feet Under* depicted teenage lead Claire matter-of-factly getting an abortion, without endless agonizing or moral anguish — but in a subsequent episode her aborted fetus pays her a visit, appearing as a cute infant (a plot device that wasn’t all that unusual, as dead people

ing that the fairness doctrine — which mandated equal time for opposing views — ought to cover not just editorials and public affairs but entertainment programming too. Because Maude had an abortion on CBS, they argued, they should have the right to reply on CBS. They lost the case, but won the attention of the networks. In 1987, the fairness doctrine itself was struck down; but by that point, it didn’t matter: The networks had established a pattern of covering their asses by presenting some semblance of balance as way of diffusing potentially volatile subjects.

In the landmark episode, Maude agonizes over the decision, but her daughter reassures her, speaking in the language of the growing feminist movement: “When you were young, abortion was a dirty word. It’s not anymore.” But more than 30 years later, as many of the tenets of the women’s liberation movement have become accepted parts of mainstream American culture, abortion is a messy, if not exactly dirty, word.

Back in 1992, when the sitcom *Murphy Brown* was hailed for its overt feminism and its titular character found herself unmarried and unexpectedly pregnant, the a-word was never uttered. Diane English, the show’s producer, said in a June 1992 *Houston Chronicle*

"I was talked out of it by nurses!"



article, "She would have used the word many times, but I wanted a lot of people to watch, and certain words have become inflammatory and get in the way of people hearing what we wanted her to say." In the end, Brown had the baby, igniting the ire of Vice President Dan Quayle and disappointing many feminists.

During the battle for abortion rights that culminated in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling, public declarations were an integral tactic of the movement. In an effort to overcome the shame and silence surrounding abortion, women organized public speakouts, at which they talked openly and honestly about their illegal abortions. Abortion is a fact of life, they asserted, and it affects women of all colors, class, and religious or political belief. Over the years, however, as the anti-abortion movement has grown stronger and more organized, the pro-choice movement has struggled to regain this clarity of speech. Young women who were born after *Roe* continually assert that abortion is a private decision, a private choice that needn't be broadcast — an attitude that is at once true but also extremely politically naive.

Veteran TV producer Diane English acknowledged this back in February 2001, when she wondered aloud to the *New York Times*: "Maybe women...only had to think about their Manolo Blahniks for the past eight years under the Clinton administration. If women start to wonder if they will lose the right to have an abortion, perhaps that attitude may change during the next four years." Sadly, it seems like it may take another four years for women to get scared — and angry — enough to demand that popular culture reflect their concerns.

Abortion in the Real World

The current state of abortion on TV reflects both mainstream American attitudes toward abortion and contemporary feminists' discord over pro-choice strategies. While poll after poll indicates that a majority of Americans support the upholding of *Roe v. Wade*, it's also clear that a majority of Americans have deep concerns and moral conflicts about abortion. This ambivalence is reflected in the pro-choice movement, too, as nationally recognized feminist leaders speak of

the need to recognize the agony and shame that accompany abortion. Given this roiling mass of conflicting feelings and politics, it's no wonder that an hour-long drama can't get a handle on the issue.

As Syracuse University's Thompson points out, "A lot of people strongly feel that there's too much sex on TV, but they will have no trouble watching an episode of *Blind Date* or *Desperate Housewives* in their own home. With abortion, those feelings aren't so easily eliminated in one's TV viewing. No [networks] want to run the risk of powerfully offending people on either side [of the issue]."

As a result, what we see on TV isn't likely to satisfy anyone, no matter where they stand. Producers strive for a form of balance by always ensuring that there's a dissenting voice of some sort — a friend, relative, or authority figure who ardently asserts their anti-abortion stance. To pro-choice folks, TV's take on abortion seems unnecessarily harsh, moralizing, and punitive. With the exception of the unaired *Degrassi* episode, you never see a character undertake an abortion the way many women you know do: With the utter confidence that she's doing the right thing in a difficult situation. To abortion foes, TV is littered with anti-fetus propaganda that leans heavily on the choice angle while refusing to come out and declare that abortion is murder. It's a no-win situation.

Out in the real world, feminists and reproductive-rights activists are working to rescue the language of moral values from the radical right, and

es. For now,

it's unlikely that TV viewers will ever see one of the *Desperate Housewives* unapologetically opting for a second-trimester abortion when she realizes her fetus has profound genetic anomalies, or one of the lissome gals on *The O.C.* sporting an "I had an abortion" baby tee, proclaiming that ending her pregnancy was the best decision she ever made.

The trashy, ephemeral landscape of pop culture may seem like an unimportant front in the battle for women's rights, given the injustices that befall real live women and girls every day around the world. But as the 2004 election has shown, the U.S. is in the midst of an all-out culture war, in which public language and pop images are playing a crucial role in shaping the terms of the debate. In the struggle to capture the hearts and minds of Americans, the reproductive-rights movement — like the rest of the progressive movement — needs to find new ways to present its case openly and frankly. Like death and taxes, abortion is one of the world's certainties — no matter the legal status, there will always be unintended pregnancies, and there will always be women who seek to terminate those pregnancies. After all, of the six million pregnancies each year in the U.S., half are unintended; some 47 percent of those unintended pregnancies result in abortion. And has history has shown us, not talking about it won't make it go away. ☆

"I had a wacky plot twist!"



using it in this thorniest of issues to present the decision to have an abortion as a deeply moral one. To name just a few examples, Jennifer Baumgardner's new documentary *I Had an Abortion* and national news articles by feminist activist Amy Richards and novelist Ayelet Waldman detail their difficult abortion choices.

Rachel Fudge is the senior editor of *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture*.

Media and Technology Traditions

Victor Goonetilleke, the president of the Radio Society of Sri Lanka and a well-known international broadcaster, wrote these words after working tirelessly on amateur (ham) radio to help his compatriots who had been left devastated by the tsunami:

"I wish I could scream aloud and tell people in some high places that when all else is dead, shortwave is alive."

Over the last decade, there have been many predictions that shortwave radio -- the "old technology"-- would soon die out. However, despite some cuts from various stations and the advent of Internet audio, shortwave radio is still with us, as it has been since the 1920s. There are many reasons why this traditional medium perseveres, and is often preferable to more recent forms of international communication.

One reason is that shortwave broadcasts can be heard over thousands of miles, and can reach many parts of the world where the Internet, telephones, cell phones, and AM/FM radio are not feasible. There are many places where electricity is unavailable or unaffordable for most people, and where a simple battery-powered or crank-driven shortwave radio can be a lifeline to the world.

As many Americans found out after September 11th, or in such recent disasters as the Asian tsunami, the Internet, phone service, and AM/FM radio can be crippled or cut off entirely in times of turmoil. At such times, shortwave radio is a way to keep connected with the world, and the use of shortwave in amateur radio (broadcaster to broadcaster transmissions, which also can be heard on shortwave bands) has also been a lifesaver.

Even in a place where Internet audio is easily available, it is not always the best way to go. Radio stations that have webcasting can only accommodate a certain number of listeners. When a lot of people want to hear breaking news or a popular program, servers can easily get overloaded. Also, Internet audio doesn't always work well on laptop computers, so one is often better off with the portability of shortwave. Too, a good shortwave portable is much less expensive than a computer, and today's shortwave radios are usually easy to use even for those who are not computer-literate.

Some countries also forbid their citizens to have Internet access, fax machines, and satellite dishes that would allow them to hear outside information and viewpoints. The North Korean government, for example, only allows their citizens to use fixed-frequency radios and TVs, which only air government broadcasts. In such places, many people take the risk of secretly

listening to easily hidden shortwave radios so that they can find out what their governments don't want them to hear.

Another key reason that shortwave continues to be popular around the world is that it offers a great variety of programming. It allows listeners to hear viewpoints that they might not be exposed to on domestic radio or TV. Shortwave often lets one hear breaking news events before it reaches the mainstream media, and events that are not covered by domestic broadcasters. The diversity of programs available on shortwave is also a great way to discover and learn about other cultures through music, art and history features, and language lessons. Many countries broadcast in English, but those in other languages can be a way to improve one's language skills, or to keep up with news from one's homeland. And of course music programs cross language barriers.

It is usually easier to add shortwave listening to your media diet if you have some information to get you started. Annually published books such as *Passport to World Band Radio* or the *World Radio TV Handbook* present invaluable information about stations, programs, and frequencies. These books also provide tips to help beginners learn the ropes of shortwave listening. Due to changes in propagation conditions, many shortwave stations use multiple frequencies and change frequencies seasonally, so it helps to keep on top of the latest information. International broadcasters such as the BBC, Voice of America, Radio Netherlands, Voice of Russia and many others post updates on their websites, or one may write to stations for schedules.

There are also a number of Internet mailing lists and Usenet groups where listeners exchange information. Additionally, there are a number of clubs around the world, such as the North American Shortwave Association and the Danish Shortwave Club International. Both have printed and Internet information on what people are hearing, and they are also a great way to connect with other shortwave listeners and make friends around the world.

Although shortwave radio is nearly a century old, this traditional method of broadcasting still has a lot to offer and will continue on for decades to come, provided there are people who take advantage of it and keep it alive. As I say at the end of my own weekly shortwave program, "Shortwave lives, and the world's out there for the hearing!" ☆

Marie Lamb has been involved in shortwave and FM broadcasting for 15 years, including hosting and producing the weekly DXing with Cumbre broadcast via World Harvest Radio stations WIIRI, WIIRA, and KWIIR and on the World Radio Network. She lives in Syracuse, New York.

Further Reading:

Passport to World Band Radio - www.passband.com

World Radio TV Handbook - www.wrth.com

North American Shortwave Association
www.anarc.org naswa.org

Radio Netherlands Media Network Blog
medianetwork.blogspot.com

Universal Radio, has many links to radio stations, clubs, etc.
www.dxing.com

High Frequency Coordination Conference
www.hfcc.org



Mix one part activism with equal parts high technology and good old word-of-mouth marketing, add a dash of pop culture and what do you get? The continued success of *The Meatrix* and the growing sustainable agriculture movement promoted by Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, or GRACE. Though only four minutes long, the award-winning Flash animation film about the ills of factory farming broke new ground in disseminating information to millions of people around the world. To explore this burgeoning form of media — a new tradition of communication and expression — *Clamor* went to the source, GRACE Director of Marketing and Executive Producer of *The Meatrix*, Diane Hatz.

What was the inspiration for The Meatrix?

In early 2003, we received an invitation from a design company called Free Range Graphics to submit a proposal for their first ever Flash Activism Grant award. Over 50 nonprofit groups submitted proposals and we were chosen as the winners. Free Range felt that factory farming was a crucial issue and that the public needed to be educated about the problems surrounding industrial agriculture. They also told us that an important reason why they chose us as the winner was because we offered a positive solution. "Rather than simply tell people there was a problem, we encouraged people to visit the Eat Well Guide, an online directory of sustainable meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs from sustainable farms, stores, and restaurants throughout the US and Canada. It was a project we were preparing to launch and we felt *The Meatrix* would be a good way to promote the guide while educating people about factory farming.

We supplied Free Range with as much information as we could on factory farming, breaking it down as much as possible. When they read through the material we sent, they were overwhelmed with all the problems caused by this type of food production. One of them commented that it was like the Matrix and the idea was born.

The issues covered in film are serious, yet the tone and style — from Leo the pig's voice and delivery to the pop culture references and the use of Flash animation — is funny, even hip. Why did the producers decide this was an effective way to discuss what's happened to farming?

All of the issues surrounding factory farming — the massive pollution, the cruelty to workers and animals, the health effects, the impact on rural communities, the loss of factory farms — are very depressing issues. And it can be difficult to get people to listen to your message if what you say is too dark — so what better way to educate someone about a serious issue than through using humor and pop culture? The way to reach new audiences is through mediums that they can understand. Because we live in a pop culture society, the best way to reach what I call the unconverted — people who know little or nothing about the issue — is through humor and pop culture references.

Who did you want to reach with The Meatrix?

I have found a tendency in the nonprofit world to keep messaging geared toward the already converted, people who already know about an issue and who are already motivated to try to do some-

thing to change it. My goal is to reach the unconverted — in this case, people who do not know about factory farming and people who do not want to give up eating meat. We wanted to reach people who might be afraid of the V word (vegetarianism) and let them know that they don't have to stop eating meat. They simply need to look at the problems with it and switch to healthier, more sustainable options.

How has the medium — an online download that can be viewed at any time and that perpetuates through email forwards — contributed to its success?

Word-of-mouth advertising has always been the most effective form of advertising. In the same vein, word-of-mouth education is the most effective way to disseminate information that people will believe. If your friend is going to forward you something, you'll be more interested in reading or seeing it, and you'll take it more seriously. The Internet has speeded up our ability to get information out to the public and to each other, so rather than build slowly, *The Meatrix* literally exploded online. Our server even crashed twice from all the traffic!

In addition, email forwarding can lead to repeat advertising. If you want to get a message through to someone, the best way to do it is to repeat it until it sinks in. Because of the nature of the Internet, many people who viewed the film sent it to everyone in their address book. This led to many people receiving it more than once, which meant the message was being reinforced again and again. Some people told us they are still getting it in their inbox, and others have received it a dozen or more times from different friends.

Is this the beginning of a new type of media for activism? What are its strengths and limitations?

Based on the number of organizations contacting Free Range Graphics these days, wanting to have their own Flash animations created, I would say, yes, this is a new type of media for activism. The strengths of Flash animation are that it's visual, colorful, short, and has the ability to reach people who might not otherwise be open to the ideas contained within the film. The limitations are that many people are still not online, there can be download problems for people on dial up, and it can be expensive for nonprofits with little funding. We won this as an award so we had it made for free, but we were told it cost upward of \$20,000 to produce. (The Flash Activism Grant is an annual award, so anyone interested in entering should visit Free Range's website at www.freerangegraphics.com.) ☆

GRACE is currently exploring a possible sequel to The Meatrix that deals with mad cow disease, in addition to looking for ways to combine activism, music, art, pop culture, and the Internet to create the next level of advocacy.

For more information:
www.themeatrix.com
www.sustainabletable.org
www.factoryfarm.org
www.catwellguide.org
www.gracelinks.org



Many cultures throughout history have had rich traditions of nature and environmental storytelling. In the Great Lakes region the Ojibwa Native Americans believed that the picturesque Sleeping Bear Dunes were formed by the bodies of a mother black bear and her two cubs that had tried to escape a tremendous forest fire. In an old African tale, a young Nandi boy ingeniously brings rain to his drought-stricken home by firing an arrow into the air. The 800-year-old Nigerian folktale "Why the Sky is Far Away" warns of severe consequences if people greedily overexploit natural resources.

Today, in most of the West, we tend to view our world largely through the lens of the scientific method, rather than through the supernatural and mythical creation stories (although those modes of thinking are still very much with us). And over the past few centuries, one of the cornerstones of this process of understanding our world has become journalism—from investigative muckraking to op-ed commentary and everything in between.

But many observers are questioning if the environment is receiving short shrift in a media culture that is more corporate conglomerates than independent voices, more sound bytes and shrieking heads than in-depth analysis and back-story, more J-Lo and Scott Peterson than E.O. Wilson and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

words **Brian C. Howard**
illustration **Susie Ghahremani**

Where are all the Environmental Stories?



Is it the Media's Fault?

Jane Kay of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who has been an environmental journalist since 1979, argues that there are actually many more environmental stories being written now than in past decades, and that there is a greater understanding of "the whole range of issues." But some critics say many of those stories are relegated to specialty publications like *Grist* and *Orion*, and claim there is reason for concern.

In the winter 2002 issue of *Nieman Reports*, the magazine of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism, veteran reporter James Bruggers writes, "Newspapers that several years ago had four people covering the environment full time now seem to have three, or two. Those that had two now have one."

Interestingly, eight of the top 25 (and five of the top 10) of Project Censored's most underreported media stories from 2003 to 2004 were environmental stories including: the Bush administration's purging and manipulation of scientific information "in order to push forward its pro-business, anti-environmental agenda;" the potentially lethal contamination caused by the U.S. military's use of uranium munitions in the Middle East; the dangerous and dirty policies promoted by Vice President Dick Cheney's closed-door energy bill task force; and enormous proposed taxpayer hand-outs to the moribund nuclear industry.

Also in the winter 2002 *Nieman Reports*, retired *New York Times* reporter Philip Shabecoff wrote, "Unlike the assiduity with which every twist and turn of news about politics, economics, business, sports and the arts is given space in the media, environmental stories have to make a special claim of significance to be given consideration for inclusion... Even when they do run, such stories are often treated negligently." Kay concurs, saying "I think that many newspapers don't put important environmental stories on the front page." She suggests that one reason may be because such stories often do not fit into the traditional model of breaking news.

Peter Phillips, director of Project Censored and a professor of sociology and media at Sonoma State University, argues that media organizations often do not invest the ink or airtime needed to clearly explain, evaluate, and repeat all of the intricacies of environmental issues, which often manifest through gradual trends. Shabecoff wrote in *Nieman Reports*, "The prevailing response to environmental stories among some of my editors was 'What, another story about the end of the world, Shabecoff? We carried a story about the end of the world a month ago.'" Phillips says this perception of staleness of environ-

mental issues can be a particularly high hurdle in the independent press, which he says is often focused on newness.

Beth Parke, the executive director of Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), says the key is for journalists to take the oftentimes abstract concepts of environmental stories and frame them in ways that clearly affect people's daily lives. "Journalists need to speak to their audience, and make it seem like they are giving the information people need," says Parke. In theory, reporters should have no trouble doing that, since the environment obviously affects everyone's well being, from their personal health and property values to their children's future.

Parke says some of the most difficult environmental issues to cover include those surrounding human population and climate change. The former has long intersected with hot-button issues of race and religion, and the latter involves enormous bodies of highly nuanced scientific data. Scientists are notoriously reluctant to make conclusions, explains Parke, and they often report disparate, fragmented data. Kay adds, "Many environmental stories reflect uncertainty over science, and that is just the way it has to be."

Parke also says environmental health stories can be difficult to present, since they often deal with extremely minute levels of chemical exposures, or nebulous combinations of exposures. Such stories can require understanding of epidemiology, science and medicine, as well as how to sort through conflicting research and the peer review process. Phillips adds that certain ultra-controversial topics, such as fluoridation of public water supplies, the debate about remaining oil reserves, and the question of whether chemical contrails are being spread from experimental aircraft (as some claim they have seen), are severely underreported.

Corporate Leviathans

Phillips sees the increasing corporate consolidation of media as an 800-pound gorilla. "The corporate media monopoly is mostly in the entertainment business, and is looking for stories with emotional charges that will scare us, or titillate us," he explains. "For example, the Scott Peterson case was a huge story, but the opportunity cost is a loss of good coverage. The main message [of corporate media] is not to be an activist, it's to shut up and go shopping."

SEJ's Parke counters that she believes the public has always craved sensational and gossip stories, but that it has also always had a strong desire for "hard news." Media organizations have to compete in the marketplace, she agrees, "but they really do believe in their product," she says.

Phillips argues that the "real culprits" in environmental issues are often corporations, and the "revolving door" by which corporate officials often go to work for government agencies, and vice versa. "[Environmental] stories are about decisions made by powerful people that impact us, but corporate media often doesn't cover them," he says. Phillips points to the 1997 firing by Fox 13 in Tampa, Florida of reporters Jane Akre and Steve Wilson, who claim they were ordered to make what they considered false statements in coverage of bovine growth hormones after major advertiser Monsanto complained to station

"The great irony of journalism is that excellent investigative reporting really isn't all that profitable. First, it involves a great deal of overhead to pay for research costs. And even though it may attract viewers, the commercial media's buck ultimately stops with advertisers, who may take offense at a particular report, and nervous executives, who may cringe in the face of possible lawsuits."

management. Phillips says the enormous companies that now control much of the nation's media are heavily interlocked with corporate America, through direct ownership, controlled seats on boards and other relationships.

Kay of the *Chronicle* says she personally has never experienced any pressure from her employers to adjust the content of her reporting. But she suggests, "Reporters in small towns can have it tough, especially if there is not a diversity of economic power." Kay says she knows of a "very solid reporter" who was pulled off a beat on California's north coast because of charges he was "pro-redwood," as well as similar issues at small town papers in Arizona mining towns. But in the end, Kay concludes, "Journalists' mistakes and inability to step up happen because we don't have enough space or reporters, not because the business department is changing the story."

But in 2000 the *Austin Chronicle* concluded, "The great irony of journalism is that excellent investigative reporting really isn't all that profitable. First, it involves a great deal of overhead to pay for research costs. And even though it may attract viewers, the commercial media's buck ultimately stops with advertisers, who may take offense at a particular report, and nervous

executives, who may cringe in the face of possible lawsuits."

Hope for the Craft

Kay says one of the challenges of environmental reporting is that it can be a very adversarial beat. A lot of different sources have to be juggled, including industry, advocacy groups, government and the public. Still, she says, "a lot of people want to get into it, and reporters like it."

SEJ's Parke says many students are now specializing in environmental reporting at journalism schools and other programs. Phillips says good reporters needn't necessarily have cut their teeth in classrooms, but that it can be helpful.

SEJ is working to improve the quality, accuracy and profile of environmental reporting through an ever-increasing variety of programs, according to Parke, from a mentoring system to annual conferences to eco-tours for journalists. Internet-based learning is next on the horizon. She also says media bosses are very worried about attracting and keeping their future audiences, particularly in the age of the Internet, and she points out that young readers are typically very interested in environmental information. Parke would also like to see more interest and organization from the media-consuming

public, whom she says must ultimately drive coverage.

Phillips agrees that this is possible, but adds that legislative action on the federal level is also necessary. "We will not have environmental and political reform without media reform." He hopes for an explosion of independent media, bolstered by government funding. ☆

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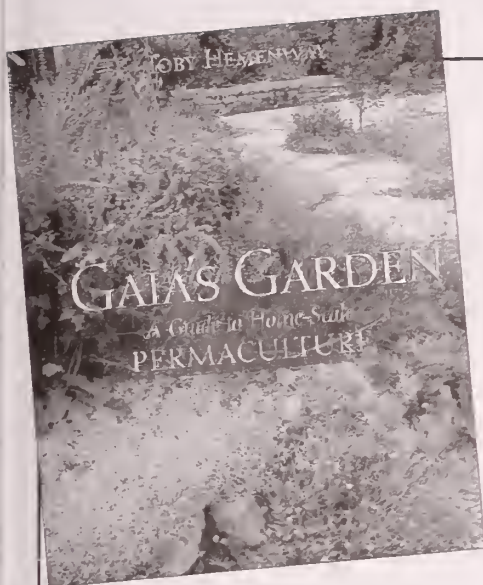
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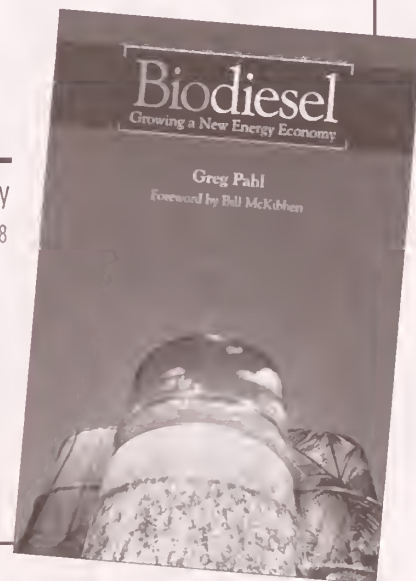
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Unite to Win!

the debate
over reorganizing
organized labor

by Ken Allen and Don McIntosh
Illustration: Todd Alan Breland

Given an anti-union White House, growing employer attacks on unions, and a legal framework that gives management every advantage, can the union movement survive into the future? Can it stop its decline as a percentage of the workforce if it continues to operate as it does now? Sparked by a controversial proposal called “Unite to Win” by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the country’s largest union, a nationwide debate is breaking out within organized labor about how to stop its own extinction.

Ken Allen and Don McIntosh recently devoted an episode of their show *Labor Radio* to discuss the most contentious aspect of the SEIU proposal. *Labor Radio* is a weekly program about working people, the labor movement, and organizing broadcast on community radio station KBOO, 90.7 FM, in Portland, Oregon. Tom Leedham and Leslie Frane were among the several guests to talk about various ways to restructure the union movement. Tom is the President of Portland-based Teamster Local 206 and a nationally-known progressive labor leader who has twice run for President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters against conservative Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. Leslie is the Executive Director of SEIU Local 503, also known as the Oregon Public Employees Union. As a member of the international executive board of her union, she was privy to discussions within SEIU that led up to that union’s challenge to the labor movement to undertake thorough reform.

This article is based on an abridged version of their discussion...

This discussion has been reported on quite extensively in the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. It's a debate that, for some, has been long overdue. Can you tell us, first, how it came about within SEIU?

Leslie Frane: Within SEIU, we've been talking for years about the problem of decreasing union density, by which we mean the fact that an ever-declining percentage of American workers belong to labor unions. We've tried within our own union to reverse this trend by spending more resources on organizing unorganized workers — on bringing new members into our union — because we recognize that the power of our current members depends on numbers. Our power depends on numbers, so the more members we have, the stronger we are as a collective. As a result of putting more resources into organizing, we've managed to grow, but not enough to reverse the overall national decline in union density, which has us all very worried about the future of the labor movement.

Can the union movement survive without dramatically changing its structure, Tom?

Tom Leedham: I think there has to be some serious changes in structure, but elsewhere as well. This debate and discussion is long overdue, and is very necessary, if only to point out some of the problems that we face.

Leslie, I want to ask you about some of the details of the proposal that your union is pushing. Most American unions have local chapters that are chartered by national bodies that are headquartered either in DC or New York. The national bodies are usually referred to as internationals because they often have some local chapters in Canada. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is one example of an international. Teamsters Local 206, on the other hand, located in Portland, is an example of a local. Most American unions are affiliated in this loose, voluntary federation of unions called the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). The AFL-CIO, in turn, has national, state and local structures which coordinate political efforts, and serve other functions as well. So the crux of this proposal that SEIU is pushing is for a major restructuring of the AFL-CIO itself. Am I right?

Leslie: That's right. Within the labor movement, the members are the union. We like to concentrate as much power as we can at the local level. We're a democratic institution. Our members make all of the decisions about their contracts, about whether or not to strike, about electing the officials that make key decisions in terms of the policies that unions fol-

low. So, because so much of our power is concentrated at the local level, for really key ideological reasons, there has been historical reluctance to give the AFL national authority to make decisions about merging unions, for example. Decisions about how locals spend their dues dollars. I certainly understand that reluctance. We want to maintain a democratic tradition in which power is centered in the members.

The problem is that the employers that we deal with, over the years, have become much more centralized themselves. In most labor movements, we no longer deal with locally-based employers, but rather national corporations and often multinational corporations. If we're not structured in a way in which we can deal with those large national and multinational corporations as equals then we can't make progress on behalf of our members. No small local can confront a multinational corporation and win. We need to combine together, and combined together, we need to be able to make decisions as a group.

So part of the SEIU's plan would concentrate more decision-making power into the hands of the AFL and convert it from a loose federation into a body where some decisions are made centrally. We think that's necessary to confront the challenges that we face which, as I said, are becoming much more focused on the national and, in fact, the international level as well as globalization continues.

There are about 60 or 70 different international unions currently in the AFL-CIO. Probably the most controversial part of the SEIU proposal is to force the merger of some of those international unions. Can you explain how that would work?

Leslie: Yeah. The SEIU plan is really a blueprint and a lot of the details are not worked out, partly because we know that we need to work those out collectively.

Some multinational corporations bargain separately with as many as eight or nine different international unions. It is essentially a divide and conquer strategy on the part of the corporations. It means that, instead of combining the power of nine international unions, instead of having all of the members of all of the different locals within them speak as one, we're divided into nine less-powerful groups. If those unions merged so that they had joint, coordinated bargaining — so that the workers had a combined voice, and if necessary could set a joint strike deadline for one contract — imagine how much more powerful we would be.

Now, getting from here to there is complicated. How we do that [in a way which is] consistent with recognizing the need for rank-and-file democracy is something that, I think, requires a lot more conversation and a lot more discussion, but it just isn't acceptable

to continue along a track where our members are divided while the bosses are united. That's a path to the defeat of organized labor.

What's been the reaction of some of the other unions to the merger idea?

LF: I think that that's been the hardest for folks, because people are very proud of the individual traditions and cultures within their unions. Particularly for smaller unions — even though they may recognize that as a small union, frankly, they don't have the power to make as much progress as they would like for their members — they are wary of the idea of supporting a platform that could mean that that union becomes part of a bigger union.

I think we all struggle with the question of control versus power. The smaller the unions are, the more an individual local or individual leader can control their destiny. The larger they are, the more power they have, but there also is a diminution of control. I think that's tough for people to get their heads around. We recognize that any process of mergers, again, would have to respect democracy. We would need to figure out a process where any decisions that get made are not made by individual union leaders in order to increase their power, but rather in a way that determines what is best for the particular group of workers.

We think that healthcare workers are best represented when they are in a union that represents lots of healthcare workers. Similarly, we think that industrial workers are best represented by a union that has lots of industrial workers. That is how the union is able to have a voice in the industry, and not just in a specific workplace.

But how we figure out how to get from a system that has 60 affiliates, some of which are just too small to have the type of power they need to make progress on behalf of their members — how we get from 60 to whatever smaller number would be appropriate, I think is going to be a challenge.

Tom, you want to add something at this point?

Tom: I wanted to mention that there are a number of proposals out there from international unions — about a half-a-dozen serious proposals and other comments. I think the one main criticism that I have of all of the proposals is that they really fail to mention the importance of union democracy. Obviously we organize to build power for working people on the job, we believe in industrial democracy, yet in these proposals, there is virtually no mention of the need to increase the democracy in our labor movement.

If I went out and asked an organizer, "What's the biggest barrier to you successfully organizing those workers?" ... They would name a number of other problems. For example, that it's almost illegal in this country to organize. That workers can and do get fired for organizing, even though the law says that they can't be, there's no penalties. That the boss is willing to spend millions and millions of dollars on union-busting and ways to defeat their own workforce. Those are things that are much more important.



When I speak about that, specifically I am talking about direct election of union officers. Not just direct election of local officers, but direct election of the top international officials, the decision makers, the people who are going to be making the decisions about this restructuring. That's missing from all of these proposals and I think it is a key element if we are going to strengthen the labor movement.

Democracy brings accountability to the labor movement. It gets us away from this concept that the union is a business. I don't like to compare the trade union movement to a business model. Democracy has to be a key element of any restructuring if we intend to attract new workers. They need to believe in the organization that they're joining and they have to know that there is accountability from the people that make decisions.

Not to play devil's advocate here, but ... there was direct election of officials in the Teamsters union and Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. was elected instead of Tom Ledham.

Tom: It's not just about who is elected. It's about being able to hold the leadership accountable. It's about having a real voice in the affairs of the union and in the goals of the union. It's about attracting people to democratic organizations. I don't think it's just about who wins.

Our union has changed dramatically since the days prior to when we had direct election of officers. It will never go back as long as we have direct elections — as long as we have democracy in the union regardless of who wins. It also makes the leaders work harder. It's a much more dynamic union than it was before, and I just don't think it will ever go back to the days of mob control, although there still are elements of that and we need to continue to work to change that. I just don't see how you can do it without democracy. If your union only has elections at the local level or some sort of a regional level, I don't think that's the real thing. It's important that you're able to elect top officers. That's how you get real accountability and these are the people that are making deci-

sions on proposals like these. They have to be accountable to the membership.

Part of this SEIU critique, as I see it, is that unions need to stick to their jurisdictions to some extent — to organize that first. There are some unions that will organize many, many different kinds of workplaces, while maybe their core jurisdiction remains not fully organized. I don't know if trucking is an example of that for the Teamsters, not to point fingers. Tom, what do you think?

Tom: No. I think that the Teamsters are the primary transportation union, although certainly there are others. But let's step back ... one of the key tenets of the SEIU proposal is this notion of core industry organizing, which I happen to agree with. If we were starting from scratch — for example, if we were saying, "let's build a labor movement" — I think these kinds of proposals, where we say that unions are going to concentrate on core industries, would make sense. "Rather than have 60 unions in the AFL-CIO, we're going to have 12 unions in the AFL-CIO. We're going to define these various industries and each union is going to organize in a specific industry." If we were starting from ground zero and building a movement, perhaps that would be the appropriate structure.

But that's not where we are in 2005. I challenge anyone to truly name the Teamster's core industry. When the Teamsters were unceremoniously booted out of the AFL-CIO in the late '50s for corruption, the union began to organize workers of all kinds. We represent high school principals in Pennsylvania. We represent the workers at Disney World; Mickey Mouse is a Teamster. We represent workers in all industries. It's difficult, if not impossible, to today identify a core industry for the Teamsters. In Local 206, we represent everything from truck drivers to nurses.

Many unions have expanded their organizing horizons over the last decade and it makes it very difficult to now reverse that process and get to these core industries. I think that's one of the problems in the proposals. The concept may be a good one, but starting

from where we are, I think it's a nonstarter.

If I could just speak to the merger aspect, as well, because that is the most controversial of the various proposals. I've looked at three merger agreements in the past couple of weeks and I'll tell you, they are all negotiated with the various parties always bargaining in their own self-interest. In these merger agreements, competing unions are merging together and they end up negotiating for a tremendous amount of autonomy, so you really end up in the same situation. It doesn't solve the problem. That's just one of the realities of the proposal.

Leslie: I agree with Tom that the devil is in the details. But in terms of the question of what do members want ... I think for most members, they don't care a lot about the initials of the name of their union. What they want is to be in a union where they have the maximum power in shaping their wages, benefits, and working conditions — in which they have the most ability to influence government policies that affect their working lives and their communities — and which give them the strongest voice in determining the day-to-day working conditions on their jobs. That means that they want to be in the union that has the most power to affect their industry. The way that we get there is by having industrially-concentrated unions.

I often speak in terms of healthcare workers, because that's what I know best. I think that most workers would say that, if you are a healthcare worker, being in one big healthcare workers union is best. For example, Catholic Healthcare West, a big hospital chain that has hospitals all over the west ... if all their employees from California to Washington were represented by the same union, that means power. I think that our members would find that concept much more important than, "Is the name of my union, or the initials after the local number, the same as they used to be?" What members want is power. What members want is a stronger voice. They're open to ideas of how do we get from here to there, although I don't underestimate the challenge of finding

a path that respects rank-and-file democracy and that respects all of the competing interests that we bring to the table.

Tom: One of the criticisms that you often hear is that AFL-CIO is a loose confederation of unions. Perhaps it's a loose confederation because that's the best they could do. I don't want to sound like I'm defending the current structure of the AFL-CIO, because I agree with the problems that have been outlined in most of the proposals. I'm just not sure I agree with the solutions.

I don't think we should be looking at business plans. Some people say, "Unions. Well, it's just a business." It's not a business. It's a social movement. There are aspects of it that are similar to a business, but it's not a business. If we made decisions based on a business model, we'd be in worse shape than we are now.

I think we can be successful and I think the debate and the discussion are extremely useful, but only to the extent that working people — union members — are involved in the debate and the discussion and the decision making. If this just happens on high, in the upper strata of union officers in Washington, DC, I don't think it makes the labor movement any more relevant to working people. That's what we really need to be concentrating on here.

If I went out and asked an organizer in any of these unions that is out there in the

to work them out, many of them are just adjustments to the rules of the AFL-CIO itself, but how can you talk about workers having a voice on the job when you're talking about forced mergers of those workers into larger organizations, where you have to say they have less of a voice. I would hope that, in this discussion, there would be a way for working people, rank-and-file union members, to have a serious say in the decisions that are made.

Leslie, I wanted to give you a chance to talk about some of the other elements of the SEIU proposal. There are some that I think people would find particularly compelling, for example, the idea that the labor movement should back social causes like universal healthcare.

Leslie: When our members go to bargain contracts these days, almost across the board the biggest problem is the rising costs of healthcare. Although we continue to fight that issue at the bargaining table, we think that the long-term solution is changing healthcare policy so that the United States can have quality healthcare on the national level. If the labor movement doesn't take the lead in fighting for that, we're afraid that it will be a very long wait.

Some of the other principles in the proposal involve fighting what we call the Wal-Marting of jobs, where more and more living wage jobs have been eliminated because of globalization and other conscious policies of, particularly, the Bush administration. We see

think that if we want to have a stronger political presence, if we want to avoid George Bush being replaced by somebody of his ilk, then we need to build a stronger union movement presence in the Midwest and the South, so part of the platform is about transforming the union movement so that we put more resources into organizing in the Midwest and the South.

So, the proposal is about restructuring so that industrial workers are in the industrial union and healthcare workers are in the healthcare union, so that we can take on employers from a position that is united, rather than divided into many individual unions. It's about building political power through our locals, but also by expanding into parts of the country where the labor movement is weak. And it's also about being actively involved in policy debates that affect our ability to bargain good contracts, like the healthcare issue, and policy debates that promote the creation of low-wage jobs and the eradication of family-wage jobs.

The proposals by SEIU and a number of other international unions can be found online at www.unite4win.org. The site also has a lively blog feature that encourages people to write in with their comments. This is going to be a long discussion. In my opinion, the best thing that can happen for the labor movement is to make needed changes, but stay united. ☆

... how can you talk about workers having a voice on the job when you're talking about forced mergers of those workers into larger organizations, where you have to say they have less of a voice. I would hope that, in this discussion, there would be a way for working people, rank-and-file union members, to have a serious say in the decisions that are made.



street trying to organize workers and trying to improve their lives on the job, "What's the biggest barrier to you successfully organizing those workers?" I doubt that even one out of 10 would say it's the structure of the AFL-CIO. They would name a number of other problems. For example, that it's almost illegal in this country to organize. That workers can and do get fired for organizing, even though the law says that they can't be, there's no penalties. That the boss is willing to spend millions and millions of dollars on union-busting and ways to defeat their own workforce. Those are things that are much more important.

A number of these issues that are problems with the AFL-CIO ... I really believe that if people sit down in good faith and try

the jobs that replace the ones that are lost are often minimum wage jobs that carry few benefits. We think that the labor movement has to be actively involved in the debate over the government policies that inevitably contributed to that Wal-Marting of jobs.

The "Unite to Win" platform also lays a lot of focus on politics. Much of the platform was written before the November election. We released it after the election, primarily because we didn't want to distract from the nationwide labor union effort to elect John Kerry. But one of the interesting things that the platform observes is that the split between the red and the blue states conforms almost one hundred percent to the split between states where there is a vibrant union movement and states that are "right to work." We

Ken Allen is the Executive Director of AF-SCME Local 75 in Portland. Don McIntosh is Associate Editor at the Northwest Labor Press, a union newspaper read by 60,000 workers in the Portland area.

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WSF participants at the closing ceremony

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Past, Present, and Future

words: Kent L. Klaudt photo: Andy Lin

The World Social Forum began in Porto Alegre, Brazil four years ago as a radical response to the neoliberal economics and practices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and as a direct challenge to the World Economic Forum held at the same time each year in Davos, Switzerland. The 5th World Social Forum was held again this January.

Since 2001, the phenomena of the World Social Forum has rapidly spread and mutated into regional, national, and sub-national Forums. The ideological roots of the WSF go back at least to Seattle in 1999 and Chiapas in 1994, but they also echo the agenda of the non-aligned nations movement in the mid-20th century. Since its inception, the Forum has been a stage for calls from global civil society and activists for radical change on a broad spectrum of issues facing humanity. The question illuminated by the WSF is this: can the combined efforts of peoples' movements, NGOs, and global civil society stop the growing assault on basic justice and equality coming from multinationals and militarist governments?

What does it mean to be anti-globalization?

While in the eyes of the mainstream press the anti-globalization movement is just a convergence of black bloc'ers throwing rocks at WTO meetings, on the ground in Porto Alegre it looks a lot different. Just about everyone now knows that our planet is "globalizing" in some sense of the world, and has been, at least economically, since the rise of capitalism in the early 16th century. The trend toward planetary interconnectedness is not slowing or stopping. So the real question is not, "are we for or against globalization," but rather, "what type of globalization are we for?"

One model talked about is that of "alter-globalization," re-organizing an interrelated planetary economy in a way that is just, sustainable, and diverse. It is a call for fair trade, not free trade; for corporate accountability, not corporate rule; for sustainable growth, not growth at any price. Instead of

letting transnational corporations extract profits from the global South while privatizing every molecule of every substance on earth (including the DNA of indigenous people), "alter-globalization" operates in a democratic way that values public and common ownership of resources, individual dignity, and cultural diversity.

The movement thus encompasses a wide array of issues: food and water rights, public control of the commons, biopiracy, military/corporate control of biotech and genomics research, biodiversity, racism and ethnic violence, communalism and fascism, refugees, corporate personhood and accountability, the right to information and knowledge, media concentration, women's status in the global economy, indigenous peoples' rights, anti-imperialist organizing, transparency in governance, international public health, education, and more.

The staggering breadth of issues in play seems much more comprehensible once the interconnectedness of these issues is pieced together. And part of the message of this 5th Forum is that we need to start thinking more about the worldwide interconnectedness of these struggles.

What happens at the WSF?

The Forum is certainly a pep rally for the left — a much-needed psychological and emotional shot in the arm for anyone who spends the rest of the year fighting hard battles against oppression and injustice. But there's a lot more education, analysis, networking, and strategizing being done down here than there is simple preaching to the choir.

The primary events at the Forum are panels and seminars organized thematically

on a wide variety of topics. The topical terrain is divided into 11 broad themes, each as a sort of village-within-a-village with its own cluster of meeting rooms, food services, stalls and information booths, and internet services. Some of the topical terrains are, for example: "counter-hegemonic communications practices and rights," "demilitarization and struggle against war, free trade and debt," "human rights and dignity," "defending diversity, pluralities and identities," "autonomous thought, re-appropriation and socialization of knowledge," and so on.

All events are self-organized this year, and there are no central panels presented by the host committee. According to activist and public intellectual Waldon Bello, of Focus on the Global South, this reflects a "conscious effort to build a space that is horizontal and open, and which encourages cross-fertilization across political, sectoral, geographic, cultural, and language barriers."

The event is held on a few square miles of the waterfront in downtown Porto Allegre, combining a tent city, an existing cultural center, and a row of warehouses along the water to house most of what happens. Each day, there are three time blocks of several hours each, in which meetings and programs are held according to topical terrain, resulting in dozens of programs being held simultaneously at any given moment during the six-day event. In addition to this, there is a concurrent and vibrant cultural program including an international film festival, loads of visual art, performance, and theatre, and music day and night. And "the best aspect of the Forum was the informal spaces where international dialogue flourished," according to Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, a member of the All Youth of Color delegation representing

the United States, North American Action in Solidarity (NAS).

In the evenings, when most of the NGO folks go back to their hotels, the Youth Camp, filling a huge park on the WSF grounds, comes alive with music blasting from a dozen different stages — some nights until 5 a.m. A lot of locals come to the Forum grounds every night to listen to music, hang out, socialize, eat, drink, and walk around.

WSF: Stage or Actor?

The salient debate that emerges from this year's Forum is: What is the role of the WSF in global politics, and is it an actor or merely a stage? For the past five years, the WSF has been solely a stage, and has consciously refused to adopt any outward platform or take any political action as an entity. The thinking until now has been that the purpose of the Forum is to provide open space for organizing, networking, and dissemination of knowledge and strategies.

Many are starting to question this approach, especially now, in light of the continued war and occupation in Iraq. Judy Ancel of the Cross Border Network for Justice and Solidarity, from Kansas City, Missouri, feels that, "We desperately need some united voice proposing alternatives to the current economic models. Whether the WSF could be useful for more than presenting such ideas, however, is doubtful. It's too big and chaotic."

There is definitely some thinking that the Forum ought to pick up the tradition of the International, which dates back to Marx and Bakunin and the 1860s. To this end, Brazilian/French writer Michael Lowy has suggested that the WSF should ideally emerge



above left a group returns from hearing Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez speak at an mst settlement of reclaimed land
above right the aftermath of a bush effigy burned to the ground



Two americans on opening day of the forum

as a kind of "Fifth International," which selectively adopts the best elements of the previous four internationals. This implies that some type of comintern or vanguard would be created to direct the outward political activities of the Forum.

Needless to say, there are many, and not just anarchists and moderate NGOs, who fear this idea. For example, Jai Sen, an activist and researcher based in New Delhi, states his belief that, "This ambiguity of identity and role has been [the Forum's] strength, and a secret of its magic."

A somewhat different, yet related debate, is developing as to whether the WSF is strictly anti-capitalist or not. Should the Forum remain a big tent that includes the many liberals, moderates, and NGOs who are willing to engage with the current economic system and its institutions and attempt to humanize capitalism, rather than abolish it? Similarly, should the Forum tolerate those working within social democracy through their participation in left-center political parties, or is this an unacceptable capitulation to the enemy?

Certainly these sorts of questions come with very difficult exercises in ethical and strategic line-drawing, and there will be lively debate within and without the WSF International Committee and Secretariat on these subjects for some time to come.

The Future of the Forum, Africa and Beyond

The WSF is a massive and still growing phenomenon. At the first Forum, 25,000 participants showed up in Porto Alegre. By the time the WSF moved to Mumbai for its 2004 incarnation, 85,000 were in attendance. This year, in Porto Alegre, there were 155,000 people, perhaps 80% of whom are Brazilian — 35,000 of this number were in the Youth Camp. There was a brigade of 6,880 translators to provide simultaneous radio translation in the Forum's four official languages this year, Portuguese, English, Spanish, and French. People from 135 countries participated and were involved in 2,500 panels, seminars and other activities. There were 2,800 volunteers working at the infrastructure level.

Rather than carry on year after year with the Porto Alegre/Mumbai model, the WSF has decided to split into three regional blocs in 2006. There will be forums in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The likely host countries for the first two regions are Venezuela and Morocco. The Asian host has not yet been selected.

In 2007, the Forum will revert to the previous model, and a unified World Social Forum will be held somewhere in Africa. Again, the host country has not been determined. This year saw many delegates from

the African Social Forum organization in Porto Alegre planning for the next several years as more emphasis will shift to Africa and its common and unique issues in globalization.

Conclusion

The global justice movement, best summarized and expressed to date on the stage of the WSF, is a force of thousands of dedicated activists working to completely re-envision and re-direct the planet's current negative trajectory of globalization. What is important to recognize is that for each of the 155,000 activists here, there are dozens more allies and actors in each of our cities, towns, townships, villages, and farms, who are becoming more and more conscious of the planetary crossroads we face, and who have decided that another world is possible. With or without the WSF as a continued stage, actor, movement, or tradition, millions of people have already decided to fight to make another world a reality. ★

Kent Klautt is a lawyer living in San Francisco.



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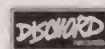
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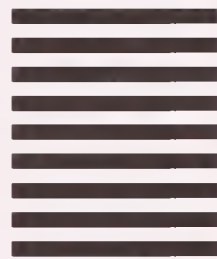
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Lorna at AK Press givin' somebody what-for on the phone. Photo by Josh Warren-White

murmurs

what we're talking about

[PRINT]

All Hands On: a The2ndHand Reader

Todd Dills, ed.

Elephant Rock Books, 2004

www.the2ndhand.com

While this best-of collection of *The2ndHand* might not have the manifesto-like feel of their free broadside, published for the past four years in Chicago; the 248 pages you get here provide some much needed satisfaction. A broadside is cheap and easy, and has helped spread *The2ndHand* to as many people as possible, but I took to this book with appropriate zeal as my first chance to spend a good chunk of time with *The2ndHand* writers. With the tagline "literate apes unite!" and featuring writers such as Todd Dills, Joe Meno, Elizabeth Crane, and Susannah Felts, among dozens of others, you know this has to be good.

The familiar mix of utter absurdity and comical situations that are couched in stories are just real enough that you feel the tug of the everyday and this is intimate without being overbearing. You recognize yourself/friends/lover/family here, but you wonder if you're supposed to. In Brian Costello's "The Night I Told My Parents the Truth," a perfect coming-out story is set up. The narrator is sixteen, at dinner with his parents, knowing he has to tell them. In fact, it is so perfect that you wonder if perhaps a run of the mill personal essay has somehow slipped

through. Until he tells his parents that he is, in fact, an "Annoying Asshole." The dad worries that his son will move to an annoying asshole neighborhood like River North, and attend Dave Matthews Band Concerts.

In the "Itinerary" section, there are hour-by-hour run-downs of 'days in the life' which alternate between hilarious and painful. Everything is written with a smirk, and while that should by all rights lead to a frustrating reading experience, the writing never crosses over into smug condescension. These writers can tell a good story, and like Ira Glass and David Sedaris, the over-the-top cleverness is peculiarly Chicago in tone — as though these writers are collectively making up for being from the "third city" situated in the flyover zone by being maddeningly precocious. *The2ndHand* might be a true heartbreaking work of staggering genius, and unlike McSweeney's, you might be able to afford this one.

—Charlotte Loftus

Belldown Paradise/ Making Their Own Plans

A double book edited by In the Field
www.inthefield.info/

Brett Bloom and Ava Bromberg work together as "In The Field," collaborating on public art projects and publications about the politics, realities, and potential of public space. Their most recent project is this two-in-one book — a beautifully designed quick-read that stands out as a unique survey of citizen-initiated space reclamation, public

art, and experimental urban planning. *Belldown Paradise* focuses on the story of a changing urban neighborhood in Seattle and the artists and activists who live and work there while discussing the history of a community garden called the "p-patch," local sustainable architecture initiatives, and artistic interventions into the climate of gentrification and the need for public green space.

The other part of this project, *Making Their Own Plans*, shares stories of hope and struggle from across the U.S. and Europe. This book functions more like a tool-kit, collecting inspiring and often-instructional information about group process and organizational structure of various self-organized activist initiatives. City Repair, a broad-based coalition from Portland, documents their intersection take-over projects called "intersection repairs" and other urban citizen-initiated public space creation, known as "place making." "Park Fiction," based in Hamburg (Germany), discusses the decade-long struggle to preserve and develop a park in the low-income St. Paul neighborhood. This initiative has managed to achieve concrete results, like getting the city to transfer its development budget into a neighborhood bank account for resident-controlled process and decision-making. They have also opened up a space for neighborhood solidarity even when material-change was caught up in city bureaucracy, by creating a space for utopian and experimental visualization of what could/might/should be built or created in the park and lot near the harbor. And finally, the Chicago based "Resource Center" tells of their 30-year long history of experiments with recycling and urban agriculture. Artist Dan Peterman

highlights a resource-center project from the 80's on Chicago's Southside where VW buses bused in soil and manure from police-mounted horses were turned into temporary self-heating housing for the neighborhood's homeless population.

This project's significance lies in its many potential audiences, including policy-making professionals, grassroots activists, interventionist artists on to urban planning students and teachers. The stories, and the groups who tell them, detail the crisis of public space and the possibilities of self-organized civil society to take the urban spaces we have inherited and make them truly ours.

-Daniel Tucker

Biodiesel: Growing a New Energy Economy

Greg Pahl
Chelsea Green, 2005
www.chelseagreen.com

We live in a global economy where goods are routinely shipped to distant markets thanks to cheap fossil fuels. But Greg Pahl suggests that a different world could be right around the corner as our fossil fuel production eventually peaks and demand in developing nations such as China increases. And in his new book *Biodiesel*, Pahl argues that while not a silver bullet, plant based fuels could be an important part of a more diverse and decentralized energy future.

The term biodiesel refers to fuels that are made from vegetable oils such as soybean oil, and are slightly altered to power diesel engines in cars, trucks, buses, and farm equipment. The good news about biodiesel is that it is a totally renewable plant based fuel that can be made by virtually anyone. But it is not expected to ever be able to completely replace fossil fuels. Experts estimate that at peak production there might be enough biodiesel to supply 10% of the fuel used by diesel vehicles.

Pahl starts his book by introducing Rudolph Diesel, inventor of the diesel engine. Diesel suggested back in 1912 that "the use of vegetable oils for engine fuels may become in the course of time as important as petroleum". And Pahl goes on to discuss how the various energy crises of the 1970's helped spur interest in developing renewable energy sources including Biodiesel. Researchers eventually discovered that straight vegetable oil would ruin a diesel engine within six months. But a modified process that involved adding methanol was able to produce a safe and reliable product.

Biodiesel goes on to look at current developments in the biodiesel industry around the world. At the moment European nations such as France and Germany are the leading producers thanks in part to government subsidies and incentives. The U.S. has 300 biodiesel pumping stations as of 2004, many of them located in the Midwest. And a number of U.S. municipalities have begun to use biodiesel fuel for things like school buses and public transit vehicles. The city of Berkeley, California for example now has 90% of its 200 city owned vehicles

running on biodiesel fuel. Pahl notes that it is possible to run a vehicle on straight veggie oil by purchasing a conversion kit which costs between \$300-\$1500.

Biodiesel discusses the history and some technical aspects of plant based fuels but it is definitely not a how-to manual for producing biodiesel or converting a vehicle. Instead the focus is much more on the economic and public policy aspects of this emerging industry. People who are interested in staying informed about recent developments in the biodiesel industry both in the U.S. and around the world should pick up a copy of this book.

-Brad Johnson

¡COCHABAMBA!

Water War in Bolivia
By Oscar Olivera (in collaboration with Tom Lewis)
South End Press, 2005
www.southendpress.org

One of the more telling scenes from the 2004 documentary *The Corporation* concerned the role of Bechtel in "providing" water to the people of Cochabamba, Bolivia. Included in the provisions of its contract (which privatized one of the most basic necessities of life) was a stipulation prohibiting citizens from collecting rainwater — taking corporate control of even the water that fell from the sky. In *¡Cochabamba!*, labor leader Oscar Olivera, co-author and translator Tom Lewis, and additional contributors Luis Sánchez-Gómez, Álvaro García Linera, and Raquel Gutiérrez-Aguilar, provide the background to the Water War and examine how Cochabamba can serve as a model for organizing citizens in future struggles against globalization.

¡Cochabamba! is the story of the people's struggle to reclaim control over their water and a story of self-determination and standing up to the imposition of neoliberalism and "market discipline." In fact, the Cochabambinos' success in forcing Bechtel's cancellation of its 40-year contract is one of the first significant victories in the fight against corporate globalization. (As "one of the ten most active water privatization firms in the world," according to Public Citizen, Bechtel has sued the Bolivian government for \$25 million claiming loss of potential profits). Their situation is, unfortunately, not unusual. As a condition of refinancing loans, the World Bank demands of "developing" countries (such as Bolivia) the privatization of public resources and requires what is termed "full cost recovery." This means that the rates charged to consumers must cover all of the water system's costs (maintenance, distribution, infrastructure, etc.) — in the case of Cochabamba, it also meant that figured into the contract was a guaranteed 16% rate of return (i.e., profit).

The situation was troubling to the people of Cochabamba on several levels. The rates charged under private control made access to safe, potable water more difficult for the poor and increased the likelihood of water-borne illnesses. Many natives and traditional peoples considered water sacred, thus Bechtel's actions were

an arrogant slap in the face to indigenous populations. Additionally, payments were "dollarized" meaning that, not required to be made in U.S. dollars, but if the Bolivian currency decreased in value against the dollar (which IMF policies all but guarantee), payments would be increased accordingly. As Oscar Olivera writes: "It was very hard for people because they did not have the money. As a result, many people simply refused to pay." Not only did they not pay their bills, thousands of citizens occupied the plaza of La Paz for days on end — enduring tear gas, harassment, even the shooting death of Victor Hugo Daza. Daza's assassin, a graduate of the notorious Ft. Benning, Georgia-based terrorist training camp, the U.S. School of the Americas, was "acquitted of any wrongdoing by a military court and reinstated in his post."

The Water War could also serve as a cautionary tale about what we allow corporations to get away with. Bechtel was awarded a \$1.03 billion dollar contract by the U.S. government to rehabilitate and rebuild crucial parts of the infrastructure in Iraq — including water and waste management. To date, according to a report by Public Citizen, Bechtel has been in violation of both the letter (as well as the spirit) of the contract, resulting in a drastic increase in water-related illness. Citing "security" issues, the public has been left in the dark on most of this — but public monies keep flowing to Bechtel, including the built-in 16% rate of return for shareholders.

Both in Bolivia and Iraq, we witness yet another instance in a long and sordid history of corporations socializing risk and privatizing profits. When the desire for profits supercedes people's rights to the basic necessities of life, or choices as to how to administer their own resources, then the legitimacy of corporate governance must be seriously questioned. Though at times scattered, *¡Cochabamba!* is nevertheless an inspiring portrait of the importance in taking direct action, holding corporations accountable, and if need be, telling them to get the hell out.

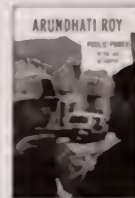
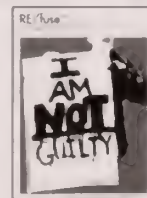
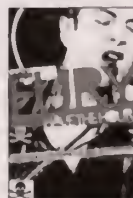
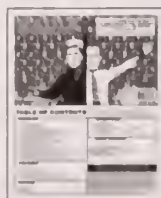
-Edward Burch

Crude: The Story Of Oil

Sonia Shah
Seven Stones Press, 2004
www.sevenstones.com

In the midst of a Nigerian wasteland, with its bulldozed groves, murky swamps, and dull smoke riding the tropical air, the oil is beautiful. It's sweet and unencumbered, low in sulfur, comprised of few impurities. A find that Big Oil appreciates and aggressively claims: Shell spent \$14 billion on its exploration in Nigeria — reportedly its largest venture outside North America, orchestrated with the help of the Nigerian government. Soon, that government would become embroiled in a violent debacle with the people of the Niger delta who were protesting the ecological havoc that ensued from the oil extraction.

It's narratives like this that charge Sonia Shah's *Crude: The Story of Oil*, an investigative tour that begins



at petro-genesis: the unlikely synergy of subterranean events that turn organic sediment into oil-rich rock. She explains why the Middle East became a geologic high roller, in a language that holds throughout the book, devising the earth as a game board of oil. Social history unfolds alongside the science: in the 1850s, crude appeared in Pennsylvania where locals used it to ward off influenza. Oil quickly overshadowed coal with its far-reaching versatility from kerosene to synthetics, and powered an American love affair with the endless, open road.

The final sections are politically climactic. Shah notes Saddam Hussein's intentions in February 2003 to oust Westerners from his revised oil production plans and the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq one month later. The chapter, "Challengers Old and New," examines energy alternatives, and Shah gives an accessible critique of the limitations and possibilities inherent in solar power, ethanol and hydrogen fuel cells, the last of which President Bush strongly advocated in conjunction with mining more coal. Says the head of West Virginia's Coal Association: Bush's advocacy was "payback" for the theft the coal industry threw into his presidential campaign.

Though Shah could have easily written a laundry list on the disruptions Big Oil and its government cohorts continue to wreak, this volume is more than that — it is an insightful missive to her readers to understand their consumptive reality. In her steady tone, she presents the danger signs: extinctions resulting from human-induced climate change, tribes losing land to oil ventures and industry lobbying for access to protected lands. She conflates these with the bolder moves of anti-oil activists and the quieter actions of ordinary people who make earth-minded choices in their transportation and shelter. The author has faith in global epiphanies taking place "before the drills, shovels, and clouds of carbon dioxide render earth uninhabitable." All is not lost — yet. When she looks into a sci-fi future where humankind interfaces with the next great epoch of crude, the scene shows moment that Shah eloquently challenges us to rise to — right here and now.

-Michelle Humphrey

Fish Piss Vol. 3 No. 1

www.fishpiss.com

This Canadian zine is thick and crammed to the gills with 160 pages of articles, reviews, artwork, poetry, and comics. A lot of the focus is on vinyl and running a record label. There is also an overview of the current state of the world, divided into regions, how-to art stuff, and a lot of rants against the U.S. government. It's newsprint pages and ornery spirit reminded me of *Maximum Rock n Roll*, but it's more book-smart than that zine, and is not focused as much on punk.

Fish Piss is largely comprised of submissions, so there is a collaborative feel to it that I really liked. The quality of the art and writing varied, but most of it was quite good, and it was really cool to see all these different people's ideas come together. Highly recommended!

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Footnote: A Zine about Me(n)

Email: footnote@fanboyz.com

Created by four men who set out to examine and take responsibility for their own gender histories and anti-sexist education, *Footnote* is the result of an intense process of self-reflective writing, discussion, and critical feedback. The zine focuses on these four men's personal experiences and strategies for change; included are essays about relationships, body image, sexuality, and menstrual blood. The personal nature of the writing is what makes the zine so powerful: Not relying solely on the more comfortable world of abstract political theory, they attempt the more difficult struggle of transparently engaging with their own histories. Footnoted feedback, critiques, and questions from participants and others involved in their community are included throughout the zine.

An important note: One of the creators shared with me that another of the four men subsequently engaged in very destructive behavior against women in their community. Given this, he considers the process a failure, but believes that much of the content is still useful.

I would argue that both the process and the content hold significant potential for others to use and incorporate into their own work in these areas.

-Debbie Rasmussen

Let Fury Have the Hour

Antonio D'Ambrosio
Nation Books, 2004
www.nationbooks.org

It's easy to forget the threat that punk was. When celebrities sport studded belts and punk songs serve as the soundtrack to car commercials, "punk" seems nothing more than a marketing tool to shift more product. So you can't blame those of us too young to have lived through the Immaculate Conception of 70s punk for doubting that it ever meant anything besides clothing and records. Yet in 1976, the sound: that ugly, abrasive, bastardization of rock, so alienating and caustic it could do nothing but disgust its detractors and inspire its devotees, was the drummer boy of a new army marching to battle. The safety pins, ripped clothing spray-painted with phrases and yes, the studded belts, served as the uniforms of this brigade.

As *Let Fury Have the Hour* suggests, two bands led this "revolution." Both represented the split personality of 70s punk: The Sex Pistols as the nihilist negation of everything that came before and The Clash as positive progressives of what was to come. With this in mind, editor Antonio D'Ambrosio posits some big questions: 28 years after the punk explosion, what is the significance of that Big Bang? Was there ever a tangible "movement"? And what is the legacy of punk paladin Joe Strummer?

D'Ambrosio offers a book's worth of reasons why Strummer was "the quintessential rude boy, punker, rebel musician, artist and activist." Spanning three decades, *Let Fury Have the Hour* boasts a formidable array of insights into the world of Joe Strummer and The

Clash. The various articles, interviews, ravings and rants paint a colorful portrait of the band, the man, the myth, the legend. To the book's credit, not all of the writings paint him in the best of lights. The critiques inject a healthy dose of balance. See for instance the article by Amy Phillips exploring differing feminine responses to the band and Strummer, or D'Ambrosio's analysis of the "myopia" of early anti-racist punks that lionized The Clash.

As much of the book broadcasts throughout, The Clash exploded the sonic and stylistic boundaries of punk. Listen to recurrent dub and reggae songs ("White Man in Hammersmith Palais") or the crucial early explorations into hip-hop waters ("Magnificent Seven"). It is perhaps due to their cross-cultural/multiracial appeal that the book opens with a brief though insightful piece by Chuck D. The Clash genuinely attempted to unite kids of all races and classes, as Chuck D. mentions. Even today it is remarkable that they brought reggae and hip-hop artists on tour, and were reciprocally played on hip-hop radio shows and name-dropped in the lyrics of reggae luminaries.

Arguably, Lester Bangs' extensive article on touring with The Clash offers the best glimpse into the life of the band and Joe Strummer. By documenting the day to day adventures of the touring group, Bangs illuminates much of the issues tackled throughout the book. We see Mick Jones inviting fans to hang out and stay on their hotel room floors. We hear discussions on race and women in punk. We witness the brewing tension between creating music as rebellion and performing it as a lucrative career opportunity. Many of the book's contributors examine that clash between art and commerce. That The Clash recorded albums for a major label is a fact neither lauded or condemned. Yet as Charlie Bertsch points, Strummer fled major Epic for indie Epitaph with his final group The Mescaleros.

But it's the candid and informative interviews with Strummer that reveal volumes about the man behind the myth. In an early interview he proclaims: "All them people, they're as 'appy as sandboys and I'd just like to make loads of people realize what's goin' on. Like, all those secrets in the government and all that money changing hands." In one of his last interviews, he states that his chief impediment is idleness, quipping: "I'd rather sit and watch Popeye cartoons than do anything."

One need glance only at the many people influenced and inspired by Joe Strummer and his music to decide his legacy. Fellow musician Billy Bragg, newer band Radio Four, political filmmakers Jim Jarmusch and Tim Robbins, hip-hoppers Not4Prophet and Michael Franti all eulogize him. But perhaps all one needs to do is listen to his music. From the first Clash record to the last Mescaleros album *Streetcore*, *Let Fury's* mission plays out loud and clear. Strummer continues to inspire others to create, question, rebel and celebrate. He joins a long tradition, according to D'Ambrosio, of potent protest music that knows no boundaries of time and culture.

-Casey Boland

Public Power in the Age of Empire

Arundhati Roy
Seven Stories Press, 2004
www.sevenstories.com/

In 1950, according to Freedom House, 31% of the world lived in electoral democracies; fifty years later, this

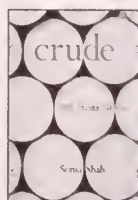
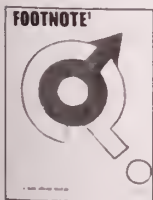


figure had nearly doubled, to 58.2%. With a little effort (and an arms race), it seemed, democracy would soon go global. And yet, more than half a century after the defeat of European fascism, can we say that democracy is, in fact, "democratic?" This is the question that opens *Public Power in the Age of Empire*, the latest salvo from Arundhati Roy.

Ms. Roy, best known for her 1997 novel *The God of Small Things* (which earned her both a Booker Prize and an obscenity charge in her native India) may have political activism in her genes: her mother, Mary Roy, fought and won an historic Indian Supreme Court battle to allow Christian women to inherit their parents' property.

This tiny volume packs an outrage far out of proportion to its physical size. Roy exhorts the public (whose interests she defines as increasingly in opposition to their governments') to reject the "cynical manipulation" of the political elites and reclaim their rightful "public power." As they become estranged from the institutions on which they depend, the people are recognizing that, in the Age of Empire, "democracy" has been appropriated by capitalism and "freedom" is just a market slogan. As language fails under the neo-liberal assault, it falls to the public to resist.

But "resistance as spectacle" — the all-talk-no-action theatre of navel-gazing "activists" that is, distressingly, growing as a trend — is failing the movement: real resistance, Roy reminds the reader, "has real consequences. And no salary." In resistance-as-theatre, with its cast of earnest Western faces, nobody (visible) gets hurt, and the sound-bites are focus-grouped for the evening news. The watchword of resistance may soon be drama, not dissent.

Even as language is "bled of meaning," the word is moving to subsume the act. Too much energy is expended in conversations about dissent rather than on dissent itself, "blunt[ing] the edges of political resistance." For this reason, as the author notes in one of the essay's most perceptive passages, the NGO culture poses serious threats to resistance movements around the globe.

Roy claims not to edit when she writes and, unfortunately, it shows. Opening this essay with a statement on the decay of language, her admitted lack of attention to it is perplexing. While at times her rambling sentence structure gives her prose urgency, Roy sometimes lets emotion get the best of her, too often she sacrifices a salient point for a sarcastic remark. This might have been effective in *Public Power's* original format (as a speech to the American Sociological Association), but it detracts from its cogency as prose. More seriously, her aggressive indignation sometimes camouflages a disappointing lack of analysis.

This essay is directed at a sympathetic audience; with its emotion-driven arguments it sets out to inspire, not convince. (While this may explain some of the faults previously mentioned, it does not excuse them.)

Public Power is a wandering discourse touching on everything from colonial debt legacies to the war on terror(ism) to "nuclear nationalism." It is thought-provoking, at some points tantalizing, but ultimately unsatisfying: it serves as an excellent abstract for a book the author has yet to write.

-Kandice Ardiel

Radix #2

www.radixcollective.com

radimag@mail.com

Radix is a leftist zine and website. This issue is largely devoted to examining U.S. involvement in Iraq through essays and interviews with Rahul Mahajan. There also an article about why Kerry isn't much better than Bush, an essay on how corporations influence politics and policy, an argument in favor of reinstating the draft, and a criticism of the No Child Left Behind act. Mixed in with all this are a few record and book reviews, a fictional story about a sweatshop worker, and an interview with musician Tommy Harrington that discusses the conglomeratization of the music industry and how it affects bands, labels, and producers.

Radix follows pretty standard radical-leftist ideology, with the obligatory Noam Chomsky quotes, criticism of Israel, and vegan cookie recipes. The writing is thoughtful, earnest, and intelligent, and avoids being simplistic or knee-jerk. Considering this is only the second issue, I'd say their off to a great start. All in all, it's a good zine and definitely worth picking up.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

RE/fuse #03

Refuse_fanzine@hotmail.com

This biannual Dutch hardcore zine packs a lot into it's 36 newsprint pages. It features above-average interviews with both Dutch and American bands, including Heaven Shall Burn, Modern Life Is War, and Deadstop. There is also an interview with a French culture jammer, complete with instructions on how to organize mass vandalism while minimizing the legal risks (at least according to European law).

The zine works hard to create a sense of community and history within the hardcore scene. There are reprints of flyers from 80's L.A. punk shows, and photos of old bands. There's an article on Raymond Pettibone, who's artwork graced a lot of SST artists' album covers and flyers, and a history of noise music. A lot of the interviews focus on the practicalities of distribution and putting out your own music and zine. My favorite article was the one on Fort van Sjakoo, a volunteer-run anarchist bookstore in Amsterdam. It went through the history of the squatting movement, the nuts of bolts of daily operation, and the political ideology of the store.

It made me want to start my own store. There are also a few reviews, and an interview with Dan from *Punk Planet*, whose zine obviously inspired the layout and writing of *RE/fuse*.

All of this is presented in a very nicely-designed format, and is well-written and free of typos and grammatical mistakes, all the more impressive as these guys all learned English as a second language. Zines like this prove to me that punk's not dead and still has a lot to offer. Anyone into hardcore would do well to check this out.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

Road to Air America: Breaking the Right Wing Stranglehold on our Nation's Airwaves

Sheldon Drobny

Select Books Inc., 2004

www.selectbooks.com

Debuting in March 2004, the liberal Air America Radio network hasn't yet broken the right's stranglehold on the airwaves as the title suggests, but at least listeners have more options.

Road to Air America is the story of the network's brief history as told by Sheldon Drobny, who founded Air America with his wife, Anita.

Drobny begins the book by attacking suppression of the news by the corporate media, stating his mission "to make it more difficult for deceit, manipulation and back room pressure to win the day."

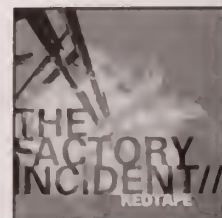
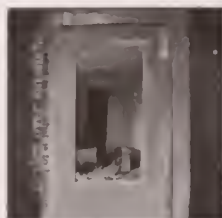
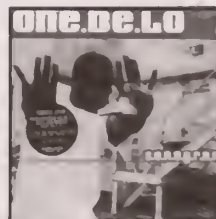
Drobny cites the lack of media attention given to the uncovering of information revealing that George W. Bush's grandfather Prescott had ties to a German industrialist, who helped bankroll Adolf Hitler, as one of the reasons for him to create an alternate news source.

He retells his journey from creating the concept to eventually being bought out and not even being invited to the network's launch party to assembling a group of investors and regaining a piece of the network.

The road to Air America wasn't paved in gold, and a lot of work still needs to be done, but Drobny isn't shy about patting himself on the back for his business sense and also his philanthropy.

The book tends to read like a giant press release, but Drobny deserves credit for spearheading such a daunting task as taking on the conservative heavyweights of the radio world.

-Bill Zimmerman



[AUDIO]

Air Raid Barcelona

E.P.

Self-produced, 2004

www.airraidbarcelona.com

The second I looked at this, I knew what it was going to sound like. The packaging is totally late-90s Ebullition, and so is the sound. This is what I used to know as emo, before emo came to describe the whiney bullshit that pollutes the airwaves. In other words, melodic, jagged guitar with scream/sung vocals and plenty of changes.

Air Raid Barcelona also have the distinction of being the only band I can think of who try to sound like Jawbreaker and make it work. The singer has the same gravelly voice as Blake, and the lyrics are obviously distilled from hundreds of notebooks filled with urgently scribbled thoughts and ideas, and so the songs are more like short stories. There are lines like "you're putting the car into park/singing 'Love Will Tear Us Apart'/unpacking into the new apartment/like this one is the last one". They manage to paint a picture of a situation in just a few words, backed by melodic punk that's earnest without being cheesy.

While a little rough around the edges, these four songs are definitely a sign of good things to come, so keep an eye out for these guys.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

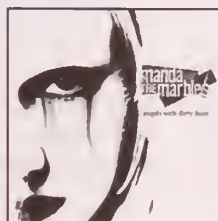
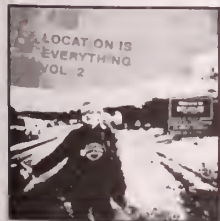
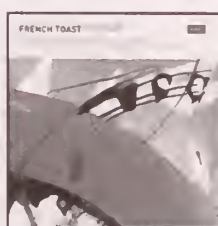
Breather Resist/Suicide Note

Split CD

Hawthorne Street Records, 2004

www.hawthornestreetrecords.com

This is a split CD release that has 2 separate discs, one for each band. Both these bands have that typical old school hardcore sound in their music production. Since both bands recorded this in the same studio, that must be the reason why. Breather Resist is based in Kentucky, and Suicide Note in Indiana. Midwest Hardcore music doesn't get any better than these 2 bands. Both bands will have (or have had) a release coming out on well respected labels like Jade Tree Records (for Breather Resist) and Ferret Music (for Suicide Note). I really can't wait to hear more tunes from these 2 bands. The overall packaging of this release is excellent. Suicide Note does an awesome cover of The Didjits' "(Mama Had A) Skull Baby." The



band's video for the song "Gag Reflex" is included in this release as well. Be sure to pick this up now!

-Adhab Al-Farhan

Circles Over Sidelights

What Is And What Is To Become

Immigrant Sun Records, 2004

www.immigrantsun.com

Circles Over Sidelights mixes Scandinavian Metal and Hardcore music quite well. This isn't all that heavy as in Swedish death metal, but this album is very energetic. The guitars are driving and so are the pounding beats. The drums are not as metal-fast but more like hardcore-fast. The vocals are straight-up modern hardcore even screamo-like. I wouldn't call this exactly screamo or emo as it is not exactly acoustic or slow poke music. While this CD has its quiet moments, they are more like in the ambient or experimental rock vein. Maybe you could even label this music art-rock. Experimentations are good. The music production is reminiscent of early sludgy hardcore stuff ala Vision of Disorder (V.O.D.). Immigrant Sun Records need to put out more releases like this one. Circles Over Sidelights is a band you'd have to hear to believe the intensity and feeling they bring within their music.

-Adhab Al-Farhan

The Decemberists

Picaresque

Kill Rock Stars Records

killrockstars.com

I had never heard of this band before and the first time I did I couldn't quite put my finger on them. Where the hell were they from? Ireland? England? I couldn't figure it out as I drove around in my car listening to the CD. The one thing I did know, though, was that I liked what I was hearing. Liked enough to take an extra-long drive, bum up \$1.92 a gallon, just to listen to them.

When I got home and looked over the press release, I found out that, no, they weren't from Ireland, or England, but from Oregon. However with tracks concerning the everyday lives of Concubines, Kings, Barrow Boys, and ghosts, fraught with dulcimers, a softly strummed acoustic here and there, I hope you can see where I made my faux pas. (And just for the record, this is the very first time in my 26 years that I have ever used the words "faux pas" in a sentence, and I am counting it as a positive achievement.)

However, yea old Celtic-type tales aren't always abundant and abroad here, lad. No, no, the Decemberists know how to spin a good love yarn . . . Granted the lovers might die at the end in a strange love/suicide pact, but, hey, the melodies are so fucking good it'll still tug at the heartstrings.

Aside from the band itself (Rachel Blumberg, Jenny Conlee, Chris Funk, Colin Meloy, and Nate Query), listeners might recognize the name of Picaresque's producer. Chris Walla, guitarist and keyboardist for Death Cab for Cutie, takes the helm at the recording booth and helps the band turn out a crisp, clean, airy album.

Colin Meloy said that he hopes people will feel as if they went through a journey with the album. If you listen, you will.

-Mike McHone

Estee Louder

Ohio's Best

Diaphragm Records

www.diaphragmrecords.com

This would be a great soundtrack for hanging out in your backyard punching your friends after a few beers or vamping mailboxes down those long country roads. The fuzzy, guitar driven lick-heavy rock sounds like your buddy's cousin's band from down river, or Nirvana from the Bleach days. It's good stuff, especially if you down Pabst Blue Ribbon and rock a big Reverend Horton Heat sticker on your truck. But I digress, this is a good CD, with track names like "I was a teenage mullet" how can't it be, and is going to be blasted loud at the first summer party I go to. Which I think is entirely appropriate.

-Evan Morrison

The Evens

Self-titled

Dischord Records, 2005

www.dischord.com

I know. It's impossible not to conjure aural images of The Evens' staggering musical pedigree while considering their debut album. Yet even a cursory inspection reveals them adept at equaling what's come before. It's different, yes, yet no less significant. The music still rocks, as do the consciousness-raising lyrics: "There is no around the corner anymore," "We can't wait for all you governors," "The police will not be excused," "There's a prize at every crime." It's commentary for anyone's anywhere. Ian Mackaye plays the baritone guitar while Amy Farina beats the drums. Listen to their deft vocal interplay throughout, and hear the apparition of Brian Wilson in Mackaye's singing, particularly in "Around the Corner," and "Mt. Pleasant Isn't." Or reference the perfectly harmonized Farina/Mackaye vocal axis of power during the chorus of "Crude Bomb" (Cru-oo-oo-oo-ude bomb). It may startle long-time Mackaye devotees. Still, The Evens are as visceral, challenging and essential as their previous projects. For proof, feast your ears on the quintessential "On the Face of It." The song sums up The Evens' finest points: interesting guitar work, potent and tasteful drumming, captivating vocal melodies, and

lyrical nuggets of wisdom: "That's the tragedy of the strategy of looking out for number one."

-Casey Boland

Franklin Delano

Like a Smoking Gun In Front of Me

File 13, 2005

www.file-13.com

First off, Franklin Delano is not an individual, but a group of musicians from Italy. And if that wasn't surprising enough, it sounds as if this album was recorded solely to invoke the end times of an acid trip. Not a freak out and not insipid, almost dreamy and just intangible. They have no peers, unless Italy is full of bands like this that I've never heard of. At times they're reminiscent of Spacemen 3 during their more lysergically inspired moments. And at other times, they have no peers and actually succeed at creating something new. Song structure is always present, whether it comes in at the beginning or the end of a song. I say that because a number of times distortion takes a good minute or two (at least) of the song as an intro or an outro. On "Matter of Time" the distortion seems to blossom out of one of the acoustic guitar chords. The manipulation of said distortion is quite impressive, not overpowering and not too subtle that you can miss it. Understandably, if one is not overly intrigued by dream like contortions of ambient sound some of these exercises will become tiresome. But perhaps, I'm as impressed as I am by the fact that the band was able to meld to genres that I had not previously thought were relatable. Good old bluesy folk song writing and avant-rock tendencies don't sound as if they should go together, but they do in fact and quite well. Franklin Delano is about to embark on a tour of our find nation and I put it to you, America, to welcome these folks with open arms and bottles of spirits. Our foreign policy depends on it.

-Dave Cantor

French Toast

In a Cave

Dischord Records

www.dischord.com

What the hell's up with all these duos lately? It seems like everything they do nowadays turns to gold, giving a studio and a stack of Marshall's the Midas touch every time they crank something out. The White Stripes, the Firebird Band, Dr. Khan, and now French Toast... Once again, the Midas touch.

Ex-Fugazi bandmate Jerry Busher teams-up with James Canty for French Toast's full fledged debut release. To call this CD good would be an understatement. Hypnotic dance tracks are combined perfectly with three-chord songs with carefully crafted melodies; the synthesizers and drum machines get a good work out on "New Dub," and the track "Insane" is... well, just that.

Busher and Canty trade off on the vocal jobs, and the guitar work, and the drum work, and the drum machine work, etc. etc. But the thing is, you see, they blend together so well that it's really hard to tell where one stops and another begins. (I was about to make a lame-ass Siamese twin metaphor, but I decided to spare you. You can thank me later.)

Not only are the lyrics and musicianship right on, but even

the albums artwork is something to take into consideration — abstract, child-like, Photoshopped - and the weirdness of each piece seems to elevate the songs even more.

French Toast will be touring later this year. Go see 'em. For only having two members, they sound just as good live as they do in the studio. Once again, it's the blending... I know for whom the French Toast tolls. They toll for thee. Jesus, I'm hungry.

-Mike McHone

Various Artists (Strike Anywhere, Denali, Cex, etc.)

Location is Everything vol. 2

Jade Tree Records, 2004

www.jadetree.com

How can you go wrong with this comp? It's an amazing collection. I guess this compilation is best if you unfamiliar with Jade Tree's roster. My favorite tracks off the comps had to be the strike anywhere and Paint it Black tracks. These are two of the best punk bands around and if you don't already know that pick up this comp to be school on why. Then of course there is more indie acts sadly the two best ones are now defunct, Onlinedrawing and Denali. With a lot of names like those of which you've probably already heard of, there a lot of names you might not be so familiar with such statistics and Challenger. All the tracks on this comp are strong, though as with any comp the styles vary and unless you as open minded about music about me some tracks are bound not to strike your fancy. This is a great comp from a great label you should all familiarize yourselves with.

-Alex Merced

Master Musicians of Bukkake

The Visible Signs of the Invisible Order

Abduction Records, 2005

www.mastermusiciansofbukake.com

Taking their name from a Brian Jones recording of African musicians and a curious Japanese practice, John Shuller and his Master Musicians of Bukkake clearly view the vast panoply of the world's sounds as their pallet. While avoiding Orientalism or exoticism, they build music from the noise of earth as learned from our global media generator: What comes out is both tribute and comment on that generator, but no simplified travelogue. Guitars that sound like kotos are plucked like banjos and wheezing accordions support wheezing voices. Slide guitars navigate a precarious path thru raga scales while sound is piled subtly upon sound.

While moments of this would be at home on public radio's Music from the Hearts of Space, there is none of the ashen quality of new age music. These are slow sounds, but they patiently make demands of the listener. If you want reflective music that doesn't treat you like a dumbass, give the *Visible Sign of the Invisible Order* a shot.

-Keith McCrea

Casey Neill

Memory Against Forgetting

AK Press/Daemon Records, 2005

www.akpress.org www.daemonrecords.com

As a long-time Casey Neill fan, I was happy to see this, but I guess I don't really agree that what these

songs have in common is their "political nature." The politicalness of the songs is vague and some of the subjects (wrongful imprisonment in Angola, the fate of an Irish immigrant, and mining) are a bit obscure to really connect with. This collection of songs from over the last ten years also features songs about street kids, finding affinity, and other things that I really do identify with as part of my culture. Casey comments in the liner notes that these songs are about memories of the last ten years, and that seems a much more genuine way to group them together. It's also kind of an intimate peak into the mind of a songwriter and makes me consider how the songs connect to each other and represent a person changing over time.

These songs, in a way, exemplify what I enjoy about his records - accessible songs about subjects I understand, melancholy and beautiful. For many of us, memories are melancholy, and this record can push you into a lost swirl of the past. Even the most upbeat musically, like "Moly," are still not about the most uplifting of subjects. I don't look to Casey for his biting political criticism, I look for more of an emotional support for activists and progressives. We (Americans) often seek validation in community and Casey's songs allow us to connect with each other.

I've listened to this record a lot during the last few weeks. It includes a few remastered tracks off of *Riff Raff* (my favorite release) which apparently is out of print. I guess when you own the record you don't really realize that other people can't get it, and I'm glad the songs are available again. Some of these are songs I've never heard and I appreciate that, but I'd also love to see some new material soon.

-Jen Angel

One.Be.Lo

S.O.N.O.G.R.A.M.

Fat beats Records, 2005

www.fatbeats.com

www.subterranean.com

You know some records are going to be great from the first few seconds of the opening track. I remember the first time I heard the heavy beats of "New York State of Mind," the stand-up bass riff that opens *The Low End Theory*, or the piano clang and kung-fu swords of "Bnng tha Ruckus," and knew that the disc I was listening to was a classic. One.Be.Lo's *S.O.N.O.G.R.A.M.* gave me the same feeling when I put it on. From the first track, it hits you upside the head with its energy and passion. It starts off with a military horn flourish while One.Be.Lo gives his mission statement, and segues into "The UNDERground," where he lambastes corporate hip-hop over a head-bobbing beat and backward guitar loops. The album maintains its passion and energy throughout its entire 21 tracks.

Lyncally, One.Be.Lo's rhymes deal with life in the ghetto, the media, racism, and love. He's definitely in the same category as Mos Def or Talib Kweli, and references Chuck D. and Q-Tip. Fans of Binary Star, One.Be.Lo's old group (as Onemanarmy) will be happy to see that going solo has only made him better. The only misstep on the album is "Can't Get Enough," which is too self-senous and heavy-handed, and the occasional rhyme coming down on evolutionary theory and fornicators.

One.Be.Lo has remembered that while lynx are important to hip-hop, without good beats no one's gonna want to listen to it. It's the beats that set this record apart. Some tracks are built around soul riffs, others on African drums, some on jazz beats, and others on piano loops. It all sounds familiar yet new at the same time, referencing old-school hip-hop while creating something fresh and exciting.

Rather than just criticize the state of hip-hop, One.Be.Lo offers up a viable alternative: Rap music that is conscious, critical, and fun to listen to. Like most hip-hop artists, One.Be.Lo is ambitious. However, his ambition isn't to create a clothing label or line of energy drinks; it's to create an alternative hip-hop community. Let's hope he has some Wu-sized success.

-Patrick Sean Taylor

The Peels

The Peels

Dim Mak Records, 2005

www.dimmak.com

So, my penguin pajamas and I have been listening to this CD on repeat in our bedroom since we first got it. Which also speaks to our social life since we got it a week ago, but that's not what I'm here to talk about. The straightforward, passionate rock and roll is a lot of fun to hear. Lead singer Miller pours it out with her throaty scream, backed by a raucous band. They sound like they'd be great live.

They would hold their own between Jet, The White Stripes and The Strokes. The Peels don't break new musical ground with this record, but they do the retro rock as well as anyone out there. Maybe now that they've given their nods to their roots, they'll strike out on their own on their next disc.

My only gripe is the length of the disc, eight songs racking up twenty three minutes. There aren't any filler tracks, but come on, twenty three minutes? The first time it cut out so short I went over to the CD player to see if there was something wrong because I didn't want it to be true. You can tell me it's an EP, but the songs just go by too fast. I guess that's a small price to pay for the energy of this San Francisco band's first album.

-Evan Morrison

The Reatards

Bed Room Disasters

eMpTy, 2005

www.emptyrecords.com

Punk's a weird animal. The Reatards are the three-legged horse of the punk scene. But, ya know what? That's good. *Bed Room Disasters* is a compilation of singles and tracks recorded in various bedrooms across Memphis with nary a real studio in sight. Most likely some of these songs shouldn't have made it to cd: the unlistenable "Fashion Victim," the ridiculous, "Puke on You," or the Germs-esque "Loretta." That's punk though and the losers are the winners. Apart from the stuff I can't get through on here there are a number of covers (Ramones, Saints, Angry Samoans), including "Running Free," which isn't exactly a Dead Boys track but lifts the riff and the vocal delivery. A number of the originals are really stunning, however. Some great choruses see the light of day like, "I gotta rock n roll/Before I lose my mind."

While not every track can be quality, there are a number of sonically competent guitar riffs ("No Turning Back," "Chuck Taylor's AllStar Blues," "Bummer Bitch"). Now that I've praised 'em, I do have to say that Jay Reatard went on to form The Lost Sounds, whom I cannot in good conscience vouch for. But, for some reason the mid to late nineties produced some really passionate punk rock.

The Reatards are one of those bands with substandard musicianship and a howling vocalist and that really just means good punk. Today there's not a band that can churn out the punk like these guys, The Showcase Showdown or The Prostitutes and that's America's loss. It seems like keyboards and disco drumbeats are more popular today than authentic anger and drunken teenagers. Oh well, I still have reissues and compilations like this one.

-Dave Cantor

Specs One

Return of the Artist

Abduction, 2004

www.suncitygirls.com/abduction

Specs One has been rapping for twenty-odd years, and has put out a million self-produced cds and tapes. His experience shows in his easy, confident flow, and his simple but effective beats are evidence of his old-school roots. Specs keeps his rhymes about rapping, specifically about his skills and other MC's lack of them. He steers clear of the violent materialism of mainstream hip-hop or the sometimes preachy philosophizing of the underground. The result is a welcome change from other hip-hop records out there, although I did find myself wishing he'd talk about something else. It reminded me of hardcore bands who only sing about how other punks aren't staying true to the scene. Aren't there more important things to be worrying about?

Specs did all the production, and for the most part it works. He has hard-hitting beats over samples of pianos, violins, even old French pop songs. In lieu of skits he includes several instrumental tracks which are pretty good, and beat the hell out of listening to staged drive-bys. The only real sour note on the record for me is "Ode to Mics", which misfires badly in its heinous use of a 50's muzak sample and it's retardo chorus of "Big ups to mic!" This would be easier to overlook if it wasn't included twice on the album, once in its original form, and then as a radio edit with the five swear words in it bleeped out.

One a whole, however, *Return of the Artist* is a solid effort. The album has got a low-key charm, and Specs' laid-back flow is kind of like Snoop Dogg if he were a Buddhist instead of a Buddha-head. Fans of old-school hip-hop should definitely check this out.

Write reviews for your favorite independent magazine! Visit us online and check out the FAQ section for more information.
www.clamormagazine.org

[VIDEO]

Jandek on Corwood

Chad Freidrichs, Director

Unicorn Stencil, 2003

www.jandekoncorwood.com

Jandek on Corwood is a documentary that seems to be more about the mystery and the cult of Jandek than about the über-reclusive musician himself (whose sole "appearance" — a snippet of a 1985 interview with *Spin's* John Trubee — is the only interview Jandek has granted in his entire career). Since 1978, Jandek has released at least 35 albums on his own label, Corwood Industries, which operates solely out of a P.O. Box in Houston, Texas. His music has been described as "stark," "bleak," "honest," even as a "33-album suicide note." The film's interviewees speculate on Jandek's real identity, the circumstances of his life, and the degree to which his celebrity (or anti-celebrity) is cultivated by his absence. That Jandek would self-press small runs of his records as early as 1978 (as he continues to do to this day) — and maintain a cordially antagonistic relationship with the machinations of publicity — certainly marks him as a DIY pioneer and as an artist whose work breaks with most standard modes production and distribution.

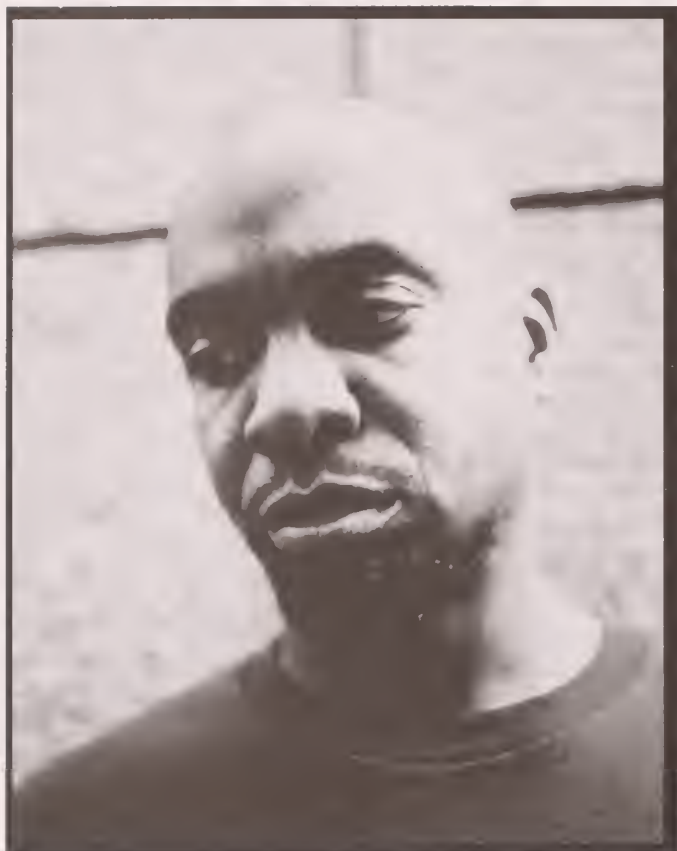
Jandek on Corwood is visually appealing, especially for a first-time director. Since album covers and song snippets were the only raw material at their disposal, the filmmakers had to get creative to prevent the film from being 90 minutes of talking head shots with stacks of records in the background. Both the landscape footage and the interview segments were manipulated in post-production to give the hues a washed-out tone (or to impose objects such as guitars, typewriters, telephones, tape machines, and so forth) suggesting imagery consistent with Jandek album cover art, if not the mood of his music.

One myth afforded substantial weight in the film is that, given the troubled nature of the subject matter he chooses to present in song, Jandek himself must be mentally, emotionally, or psychologically "off." Thankfully, at least one voice in the film points out that Jandek's choice to often present dark and troubling (and sometimes painfully personal) material does not mean that the artist himself is not an everyday, well-adjusted human being. Sure, Jandek's insistence on privacy seems to add fuel to the fire of speculation, but ultimately his proactive role in defending his right to privacy (especially in an age where media companies, multinational corporations, and governments go out of their way to rob us of that right) marks him as one of the saner people I've never met.

At the point of the film's release (both on the film circuit and into the home video market), Jandek had never performed live. Reports have trickled in that a representative of Corwood Industries (of which Jandek is the sole proprietor) performed an unpublicized concert in Glasgow, Scotland on October 17, 2004. Accompanied by a rhythm section, the man bore an uncanny resemblance to the figure often seen on the cover of Jandek albums, and sounded like the voice on those albums. In the words of the representative from Corwood: "You may not get all the answers you want. It's better that way."

-Edward Burch

HERE



with Ohio's-Own

BLUEPRINT

by Blake Gillespie

Big Daddy Kane opened his classic hit, "Ain't No Half Steppin'" by declaring, "it's '88, time to set it straight." Inspired by the same declaration, Columbus "producer on the mic," Blueprint is ready to stroll down memory lane and take it back to the glory years with the release of his solo debut, "1988."

"I want to get back to the albums that were 40 minutes long and only 12 songs deep with two verse songs," Blueprint said. "Too many people are doing 60 minute albums with 20 songs or more and only 12 of them are worth listening to."

Blueprint said the album will pay homage to the classic breaks of 1988 with a more stripped down sound compared to his two previous projects; Illlogic's "Celestial Clockwork" and Blueprint's instrumental album, "Chamber Music."

"For the past two records I've been expressing my artistic side," Blueprint said. "I had to say 'it's out of your system. Now, can you do a conventional album and be good at it?'"

Blueprint considers his breakthrough collaboration with fellow Columbus native, RJD2, on Soul Position's "8 Million Stories" to have a slower and longer playing feel compared to his new record. Rhyming for five minutes or more does not follow what he considers the conventional song structure

of hip hop's golden age. With "1988" Blueprint promises a faster paced record compared to "8 Million Stories" that will capture the energy of his live shows.

Musically, Blueprint claims the album is about paying homage and respect. The song concepts will not cover uncharted territory, but will be presented in a way only the creative

mind of Printmatic can achieve. Few performances can make a hip hop head's heart ache in remembrance of the "good ole days" like Blueprint sharing the stage with Illlogic for cover of A Tribe Called Quest's "Check the Rhime." Well, Printmatic is back with another clever cover. The legendary trio, Salt 'n' Pepa are interpolated into his version of "Tramp," as he narrates of a scandalous floosie that plays him and his weightless crew.

On "Trouble On My Mind," Print mimics the riot-inducing production of Public Enemy's Bomb Squad. He even borrows a few Chuck D's lines to open verses as he emphasizes the troubles of being an independent artist. Chuck remains an influence in the album themes as Print and CJ the Cynic cast light on Cincinnati police brutality continuing to plague the city after the 2001 riots with "Kill Me First."

"Things haven't changed since the riots; the cops remain untouchable and it makes you feel like 'shit I'd rather die then get arrested,'" Blueprint said regarding a case of a man who died while in custody of the Cincinnati Police Department.

For those who have frequented Weightless shows for the past three years, caught Blueprint on tour with Atmosphere and been to Scribble Jam; the song you patiently waited for will finally be released. If this song were a SAT question it would read like this: "Pirates are to a parrot resting on a shoulder as b-boys are to a (blank) resting on a shoulder?" The answer is "Boombbox;" Print's ode to the speaker box.

"Everywhere I go people ask when I will finally release that song and I tell them to just be patient," Blueprint said. "Well, here it finally is."

Tours are in the works to promote "1988," beginning with the ongoing Weightless Invasion Tour of Ohio with Illlogic. He will be touring this spring with an extended, nationwide Weightless tour and possibly a shared tour with what Blueprint humbly considers, "people larger than [him]."

Find out the latest with Blueprint and Weightless Recordings at www.weightless.net

Where You At? future installments of "HERE" will include reports from around the world from people like you. Drop us a line at here@clamormagazine.org and tell us about the people, places, struggles, projects, or ideas from the places you literally and metaphorically call "here."

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